

Palestinian boy shot dead

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A 14-year-old Palestinian boy was fatally shot during a stone-throwing incident in the occupied West Bank, the military said Saturday. The boy was shot in the head when troops entered the village of Yata Friday. "Stones were thrown at military force in Yata and the unit opened fire. Afterwards, the body of a 14-year-old youth was brought to the Alia Hospital," an army statement said. "The connection between the two incidents is being examined." Israel Radio identified the youth as Izzat Bader Al Harush and said his body was snatched from the hospital in Hebron and buried. Israel has kept most of the Palestinians in the occupied territories under curfew since the Gulf war began Jan. 17, saying it wanted to prevent violence by pro-Iraqi Palestinians. In the past two weeks it has gradually loosened the curfews during daylight hours.

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U.S. orders ground assault

Bush rejects Iraqi acceptance of Soviet peace proposal Over million soldiers brace for biggest battle since World War II

Combined agency dispatches

THE UNITED STATES Saturday rejected Iraq's acceptance of a Soviet proposal to withdraw its forces from Kuwait and ordered a ground assault against Iraqi forces despite last-minute appeals from Moscow.

The U.S. Defence Department said President George Bush had given final approval for a ground assault against Iraqi troops.

"Clearly, there could be a ground war at any point," a senior Defence Department official told reporters as the clock ticked past the deadline.

Mr. Bush expressed "regret" that Iraq had not moved to withdraw its army before the noon (1700 GMT) deadline. "Military action continues to be scheduled according to plan," Mr. Bush said in a statement issued by the White House.

There was no immediate word on when a ground assault would commence. But White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater said: "The coalition forces have no alternative but to continue to prosecute the war."

In its first official comment after the deadline had passed, Iraq scorned the U.S. ultimatum. Izzat Ibrahim, deputy chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, dismissed Mr. Bush's demand as "an aggressive ultimatum to which we will pay no attention."

Mr. Fitzwater said Iraq "appears to have no intention of complying with the U.N. resolutions. Indeed (Iraq's) only response at noon was to launch another Scud missile attack on Israel."

There were no reports of damage or injuries in that Scud attack, Israeli officials said.

U.S. officials said they had not been able to fully understand last-minute diplomatic statement by Iraqi

officials in Moscow and the United Nations. But they said the statements clearly did not indicate Iraq's acceptance of coalition terms.

A White House statement said U.S. commanders had "detected no military activity which would indicate any withdrawal of (Iraq) from Kuwait."

"Similarly, there has been no communication between Iraq and the United Nations that would suggest a willingness to withdraw under the conditions of the coalition plan," the statement said.

Mr. Fitzwater said Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev told Mr. Bush in a phone call Saturday that he had asked for a U.N. review of the Soviet peace proposal and had also discussed the matter with British Prime Minister John Major and French President Francois Mitterrand.

Both Mr. Major and Mr. Mitterrand "indicated full support for the coalition withdrawal plan," Fitzwater said.

Mr. Fitzwater reiterated the U.S. position that the Soviet-brokered peace plan was unacceptable. Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz had told a news conference in Moscow earlier Saturday that his government would accept the Soviet proposal, calling for Iraq to completely withdraw from Kuwait in 21 days. The coalition terms allowed only seven days.

Mr. Fitzwater said Mr. Gorbachev called Mr. Bush at 1615 GMT and that the two leaders talked for nearly half an hour.

Iranian and Canadian diplomats, quoting Soviet Ambassador Yuri Vorontsov at the Security Council, said Iraq had responded favourably to some of Mr. Bush's conditions for an end to the 36-day-old war.

But Washington stood firmly by its demand for an unconditional withdrawal from the emirate.

As darkness fell in the Gulf more than a million allied and Iraqi troops

were lined up in and around Kuwait. An allied invasion fleet was massing in the northern Gulf.

A senior French officer said the weather would be ideal for an invasion in the next 48 hours.

British pilots, quoted by correspondents in Saudi Arabia, reported an eerie calm over Kuwait and hardly any movement. Smoke from burning oil wells shrouded the flat desert.

In the Saudi capital Riyadh, U.S. army spokesman Brigadier General Richard Neal, accused Iraqi troops in Kuwait of grabbing young Kuwaitis from the street and summarily executing them.

He also accused Iraqi forces of setting fire to 190 of the emirate's 550 oil wells in a campaign of destruction.

Gen. Neal said U.S. and allied planes had carried out a record 1,200 air sorties in Kuwait and southern Iraq, 100 of them against the elite Republican Guard, the backbone of Iraq's defences.

U.S. defence officials in Washington said a ground war for control of Kuwait would include a surge of allied bombing and firepower unseen since World War II.

"Earth-shaking," said one army officer. "In the final analysis, it will be firepower and mobility that carry the day."

Defence experts have said an invasion would be spearheaded by armoured columns thrusting northward at separate points from Saudi Arabia into both Iraq and Kuwait, combined with an amphibious landing by U.S. marines on Kuwait from the Gulf.

"I can tell you the (British and U.S.) artillery fire this week was a drop in the bucket compared to the suppression fire to come from the air and the ground," one senior defence official said.

"You can safely say it would be

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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Saturday confers with two visiting French parliamentarians (Petra photo)

Jordan urges continued peace efforts

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Saturday reviewed the situation in the Gulf and discussed means of ending the war at a meeting with members of the French National Assembly Bernard Stasi and Jacques Barrot.

Discussions also covered prospects for settling all problems in the Middle East region, Jordan Television said. It said that the Crown Prince reaffirmed Jordan's support for the Soviet peace proposal and said that diplomatic efforts should continue towards settling the conflict.

The Crown Prince told the two parliamentarians,

who represent a centrist group in the Assembly's committee of foreign affairs, that Jordan had been exerting efforts from the start to settle the crisis but these efforts were aborted.

In discussing Franco-Jordanian relations, the Crown Prince called on France to help establish a security zone for the Mediterranean region based on mutual cooperation and respect for national interests.

The two parliamentarians, who arrived here Friday evening, are expected to leave for Paris Sunday (see earlier story on page 3).

Badran: Allies push Mideast into flames First Syrian oil shipment arrives

By Ian Mackenzie
Reuter

AMMAN — The Gulf allies' rejection of a Soviet Gulf peace plan and Iraq's agreement to withdraw from Kuwait will set the Middle East ablaze, Prime Minister Mudar Badran said Saturday.

In an interview just hours before the expiry of a U.S. ultimatum to Iraq to quit Kuwait or face a massive offensive, Mr. Badran said Baghdad's acceptance of the plan calling for an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait showed it wanted peace.

Asked about the rejection of the revised Soviet proposals by Washington and London and their insistence on the ultimatum to start withdrawing by 1700 GMT Saturday, he said:

"This means that the ground war will take place and that the region will be engulfed in flames and the victims on either side will be much more than anyone can imagine."

"I think it (the Soviet plan) is an opportunity which if lost will

lead to a huge catastrophe."

Jordan has condemned Baghdad's August 2 takeover of Kuwait but has also bitterly criticised the massive allied air raids on Iraq and the deaths of civilians.

Mr. Badran said Jordan had contacted almost all Arab states on the dangers of the war. Amman had also been in touch with a number of other countries, including the Soviet Union and members of the European Community.

"The acceptance by (Iraqi Foreign Minister) Tariq Aziz has put the ball into the allied court, that is if the main intention of the allies is Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, and this has been achieved."

The United States said Saturday that Iraq's acceptance of the Soviet proposals had no effect on the ultimatum.

On U.S. demands in its ultimatum that Iraq leave Kuwait in one week, the prime minister said some military specialists described this as impossible.

"The principle of withdrawal

has been endorsed and the U.N. Security Council has to supervise this withdrawal and place neutral forces between the two sides."

"If the aim is withdrawal from Kuwait territory, I see no difference between one week and three weeks, because as is known any military pullout from a practical point of view is almost impossible within one week."

Asked what he thought Washington's basic aim was behind its conditions, Mr. Badran said:

"We in Jordan want peace to prevail in the region and this withdrawal to occur. If a chance is given to the Soviet peace plan, the goal of withdrawal will be achieved and the aims of the Security Council will be achieved."

"But if the other goal is to put military ultimatums, I am certain that this war will go on for a long time, because it is not logical to deal with such methods in this form if we are going to achieve

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Arafat doubts West will tackle Palestinian problem after war

Reuters

PALESTINE LIBERATION Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat said Saturday he did not believe in Western pledges to seek a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict after the Gulf war.

He also said that the PLO might intensify the Palestinian uprising in Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"It has been talked about, but in general I have no confidence in words or promises," Mr. Arafat told Reuters, referring to Western commitments to address the Palestinian issue.

The United States and its allies in the anti-Iraq coalition have rejected Palestinian and Iraqi demands to link a military withdrawal from Kuwait to an Israeli pullout from the occupied territories.

But some European members of the alliance have indicated they would favour talks to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict after the Gulf crisis ends.

"It must be made clear that the PLO will pursue its struggle until independence... at all levels," whether by intensification of the intifada in the occupied territories or resistance in

southern Lebanon, Mr. Arafat said. He implied he accepted that linking an Iraqi and Israeli withdrawal was no longer feasible because of the urgency of halting the war against Iraq.

"What is being discussed now in Moscow is the first part of the problem regarding Security Council Resolution 660 (calling for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait)," Mr. Arafat said when asked about tying the two issues.

He urged the Gulf allies to accept the Soviet peace proposal under which Baghdad has agreed to withdraw from the emirate. Washington has rejected the plan as inadequate, saying that Iraq must begin withdrawing by 1700 GMT Saturday or face a massive ground assault.

The PLO leader said he would ask the U.N. Security Council to protect Palestinians in the emirate against a risk of "massacre" by Kuwaitis after any Iraqi withdrawal.

"I am going to ask the Security Council not only to protect the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories but also those in Kuwait where new massacres risk being perpetrated."

The PLO fears that the 150,000 Palestinians who have remained in the emirate, many who have lived there for decades, will be targeted because of Palestinian support for Baghdad.

Mr. Arafat and the Palestinians are said to be one of the biggest losers in the Gulf crisis because their backing for Iraq has cut them off from the rich Gulf states and Western nations allied against Iraq.

The PLO leader said he did not expect Washington to resume dialogue begun with the organisation in 1988 and broken off last year after a guerrilla attack on Israel.

The talks were "suspended before the Gulf crisis. They are not going to be resumed afterwards... it is their decision, not mine," he said, adding that he was ready to negotiate with the United States or Israel.

He rejected any view that the PLO was discredited because of its support of Iraq.

"The Palestinian position is unchanged... and the United States knows it. Now it has become obvious its aim was not Kuwait but the destruction of Iraqi forces and an attempt to liquidate the Palestinian cause," he said.

Asked if the possibility of a Palestinian state would be set back irreversibly if Iraq were defeated in the war, Mr. Arafat said:

"The entire Arab Nation is going to lose if the coalition achieves its objectives."

He refrained from criticising Arab

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Iraqis no pushover — military sources

LONDON (R) — Just hours before a U.S. deadline to pull out, Iraq's army in Kuwait remained dug into defensive positions and could still put up a hard fight against an allied ground assault, military sources said Saturday. "I would counsel you against assuming it is going to be a pushover," said a senior military source in London. The sources also said they believed Iraq would use chemical weapons if forced into a corner. Chemical munitions had been moved to Iraqi front-line artillery and multiple rocket-launcher units within the past week, they said. Allied intelligence had detected only localised Iraqi troop movements, probably to regroup after they had been bombed and to replace casualties. The sources said the Iraqi army's morale was mixed. "We have seen in minor clashes that they are still capable of fighting pretty aggressively and we do not know how widespread that will be," said the senior source. Weeks of bombing and artillery barrages directed against Iraqi positions have been intended to minimise allied casualties in a major ground push.

Iraq threatens to bring democratic rule to Kuwait

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQI LEADERS Saturday scorned the U.S. ultimatum to begin a pullout from Kuwait, instead saying they might install a new "democratic" government to replace the emirate's exiled monarchy.

If a ground war began, the military command said, the allies would plunge into "a great crater of death."

The deadline set by U.S. President George Bush for commencing withdrawal from Kuwait passed without any special announcement by Iraq's state radio or news agency. Baghdad came under intensified allied air bombardment shortly before the 8 p.m. (1700 GMT) deadline.

In the first official comment after the deadline, Izzat Ibrahim, deputy chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), dismissed Mr. Bush's demand as "an aggressive ultimatum to which we will pay no attention."

"Bush and his allies should have toned down their arrogance," Mr. Ibrahim was quoted as telling the Iraqi News Agency (INA).

Radio broadcasts throughout the day denounced the ultimatum and informed listeners that Iraq instead had accepted the terms of a Soviet peace plan rejected by the allies.

"We are at war and the air and land aggression continues," Baghdad Radio quoted Mr. Ibrahim as saying.

Mr. Ibrahim said the only way to stop the Gulf war was to accept the Soviet peace initiative.

"There is no way for whoever wants to stop the war except to support the Soviet initiative," Baghdad Radio quoted him as

saying. He said President Bush issued his ultimatum to divert attention from the Soviet initiative.

The radio leveled a personal attack on Mr. Bush, calling him a criminal and a madman who had tried to bully civilians with his warplanes. It said his character combined "boyish contrariness and cowardly feeble-mindedness."

Referring to his ultimatum, the radio said Mr. Bush had lost the respect of those who listened to his "barking, shrieking and hysterics."

Baghdad Radio said in a commentary that Iraq's president thought that Iraq's positive response to the Soviet peace initiative was a result of "his quixotic and failed ultimatums and his ridiculous threats."

"But they (the threats) are more like cock's crows, which Bush resembles in shape and manners," the radio said.

"Iraq ridicules Bush's ultimatums and his impudent threats and boasts of its extraordinary ethical victory," it added.

Official comments seemed to indicate Iraq was still counting on the Soviet peace plan to settle the Gulf war. The RCC had endorsed the plan in a statement Friday.

"Iraq is for peace and is working to facilitate the success of the Soviet initiative," the statement said.

The RCC rejected allegations that Iraq was destroying Kuwait by setting fire to oil installations and wrecking its facilities.

"If the American authorities would like to use this pretext to justify their aggressive position, such a pretext has no grounds," Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz said in Moscow.

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Rafsanjani wary of American plans

Combined agency dispatches

PRESIDENT HASHEMI Rafsanjani of Iran said Saturday the United States seemed to be pursuing goals in the Middle East that went beyond Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

Mr. Rafsanjani, who has been actively seeking a diplomatic resolution of the Gulf war, commented during a meeting with a visiting Chinese envoy, Tehran Radio reported.

Mr. Rafsanjani was quoted as telling Yang Fuchang that Iraq "reacted properly" by accepting the Soviet peace proposal, and noted that the United States had rejected the plan.

"It seems that America pursues an aim beyond Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait," Mr. Rafsanjani said. "Otherwise, the allied countries should show goodwill and prevent the spread and proliferation of war in the region."

One of Iran's state-run newspapers, the Tehran Times, said in an editorial Saturday that the United States either secretly supported the Soviet initiative or sought to exceed United Nations resolutions by ousting Saddam Hussein and installing a puppet government in Iraq.

Iran has sought to remain neutral throughout the Gulf crisis, while seeking to enhance its international diplomatic profile. It has urged Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, but also has called for Western forces to leave the region and make way from a pan-Islamic peacekeeping force.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said Iran would remain neutral even if the allies launched a land offensive against Iraqi forces in Kuwait.

"If land war starts we will not change our position and will remain neutral," Mr. Velayati said.

"From the start we had told Iraq it had to leave Kuwait, otherwise its situation would become difficult," he said at a joint news conference with Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Mock.

But Mr. Velayati said the situation could change if Israel joined the war.

"An Israeli attack on any Muslim country is unbearable for us and in that case we will not be neutral," he said.

IRNA said Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca Peoli arrived in Tehran Friday and said he would travel to Baghdad in the coming days in search of peace.

IRNA said Mr. Rafsanjani later chaired a meeting of the Supreme National Security Council to review the latest developments.

The meeting hailed Iraq's acceptance of complete withdrawal from Kuwait and stressed the need for continued peace efforts in view of the fact that "the recent stance adopted by the multinational forces oversteps the (U.N.) Security Council resolutions and serves to escalate military clashes," IRNA said.

In Islamabad, Pakistan, demonstrators burned U.S. and Israeli flags in a frenzied welcoming ceremony Saturday for Islam Mubarak, speaker of Iran's parliament.

Hundreds of demonstrators threw themselves on Mr. Karubi's car, kissing it and waving anti-American slogans.

Mr. Karubi's entourage of 60 will be in Pakistan for four days. He refused to talk to reporters at the airport.

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هذه السنة الحرة

Green activist lambasts allies, says Israel exploiting Germany

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The German Green Party took its campaign for peace in the Gulf to Jordan Saturday with a harsh attack on the American-led anti-Iraq coalition and Israel, which it accused of exploiting German sentiments over World War II.

Jürgen Maier, the only delegate in a four-member Green team to cross the River Jordan from the occupied territories after a political uproar caused by criticism of Israel, also said he found that the forces of peace in the Jewish state had taken a different direction altogether in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

"The peace movement in Israel is the only peace movement in the world which calls for war," Mr. Maier told a press conference.

"They are now calling for continued war and the total destruction of the Iraqi military machine regardless of the fact that tens of thousands of people could be killed," he said.

"What kind of a peace movement is that?" asked Mr. Maier, 28, who wore a badge with the slogan "pas de guerre pour le pétrole" (no war for oil) on his lapel, and, by design or coincidence, a green sweater as well.

Mr. Maier, who held talks with Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al-Lawzi, Lower House Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat, Foreign Ministry Secretary-General Mutassem Bilbeisi and Interior Ministry Secretary-General Salameh Hamad earlier in the day (see page 3), told the press conference that the Greens supported Jordan's "constructive and positive" position towards the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Maier reiterated his party's firm commitment to pursuing efforts to mobilise public opinion against what he said were moves by the German government to increase its involvement in the Gulf war.

He asserted that Bonn was caught between "being subservient" to the American approach to the Gulf crisis and opposition to war by "a majority of German people."

"They are now talking about changing the constitution," he said referring to a clause in the document which bars the deployment of German forces outside the area of operations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

"Our armed forces were recruited to defend our country against Soviet attacks, not to go out to the (Arabian) desert to look for an enemy and fight an army equipped with German weapons," said Mr. Maier in an implicit reference to past German arms supplies to Iraq.

Compounding the situation, he said, was Israel's "exploitation of the historic responsibility of the Germans (in World War II)." This has led to Bonn rushing to help Israel with financial assistance as well as an offer to send Patriot anti-missile systems to defend it against Iraqi missile attacks, he pointed out.

The Green Party, which showed well in elections shortly after its creation in the early 80s but could only get two seats in the 660-strong Bundestag in last December's all-German polls, believes that there is not enough European awareness of the real issues involved in the Middle East situation. It will seek to address this shortcoming, Mr. Maier said.

The party, which sees itself as

representing 2.4 million Germans as evident in the last election results — "another 70,000 votes and we would have had 45 members in parliament" under the proportionate electoral system — is united in its call for an immediate ceasefire in the war and a negotiated settlement of the conflict, Mr. Maier said.

But there are disagreements when it comes to the issue of Israel, he said and attributed it to the German feeling of "guilt" towards the Jews.

'Clumsy' statement

Mr. Maier characterised as "clumsy" a statement of one of his team members — Christian Strobbe — who caused an uproar in Israel when he was quoted as saying "Iraq's attacks on Israel are the logical, almost compelling consequence of Israel's policies vis-a-vis the Palestinians and the Arab states, including Iraq."

The message inherent in the remarks of Mr. Strobbe, who said he was resigning following the controversy, was that "Iraqi missile attacks on Tel Aviv are the result of Israel's foreign policy," Mr. Maier said. "But it was clumsily put."

Mr. Strobbe's quotes, carried by the Jerusalem Post, had preceded the Green team's arrival in Tel Aviv last week and the delegation was detained at the airport for over two hours before being allowed in, Mr. Maier said. "Then there were anonymous threats over the phone and demonstrations, and a German flag was burnt in front of our hotel," he recalled.

Subsequently, Mr. Strobbe and the two other members of the team decided that "their personal

security was threatened" and left for home, Mr. Maier said.

"I am the only member of the delegation who decided to complete the original tour, which included Jordan," he explained.

On the broader political front, Mr. Maier ridiculed the allies and accused them of hypocrisy by purporting to defend international legitimacy while some of the partners in the coalition themselves were guilty of violating international law.

Mr. Maier cited as examples the American invasion of Panama and Grenada and the "Turkish occupation of Cyprus" in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions. "These countries get military aid for their occupation but a country like Iraq gets U.S. military intervention for its actions," he said. "We totally reject this double standard."

He described Israel as a "tacit member" of the anti-Iraq coalition and qualified it by saying: "It was the Israeli government which called for a war. It pressured the U.S. to start this war. It ruled out any negotiated solution to the conflict. It now stands out in saying Iraqi withdrawal (from Kuwait) is not enough, (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein's removal is not enough, and that the Iraqi military machine should be destroyed with a crushing defeat."

Israel wants to become a "hegemonic power in the region," he added.

However, he warned: "as long as the Palestinian problem remains unresolved, as long as Israel continues to violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, as long as Israel occupies other people's lands, there will never be peace in the Middle East."

Text of Iraqi remarks on Soviet peace plan

MOSCOW (R) — Following is the full text of Iraq's statement accepting a six-point Soviet plan to end the Gulf war, read to journalists in English by Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz Saturday.

Last evening the Soviet government declared a proposal about the situation in the Gulf region and in order to achieve a peaceful settlement to that situation, in accordance with the U.N. resolutions.

You are familiar with the points in that declaration, but anyhow I am going to reiterate those points in English.

First, Iraq agrees to comply with Resolution 660 and therefore to withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces from Kuwait to the positions in which they were located on Aug. 1, 1990.

Second, the withdrawal of the forces shall begin on the day following the ceasefire and the cessation of all military operations on land, at sea and in the air.

Third, the withdrawal shall be completed within a period of 21 days, including the withdrawal from the city of Kuwait within the first four days of the said period.

Four, immediately upon the completion of withdrawal of the troops from Kuwait, the grounds for which all the other resolutions of the Security Council were adopted will have been removed and thereby those resolutions shall cease to operate.

Five, all prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated within three days of the ceasefire and the cessation of all military

operations.

Last point, the sixth, the ceasefire and withdrawal shall be confirmed, verified and supervised by observers and/or a peacekeeping force as determined by the Security Council.

These are the points of the plan, of the initiative that was declared by the Soviet Union last evening.

I here tell you that the Iraqi government fully endorses this plan and fully supports it.

Last night the Revolutionary Command Council issued a statement saying that Iraq supports the Soviet initiative and it appreciates the Soviet efforts to reach a peaceful settlement to the situation.

We particularly appreciate the efforts of His Excellency President Mikhail Gorbachev and his government in this regard.

The second point I would like to address is the allegations made by the American government yesterday that Iraq has created a new ecological situation in Kuwait, and you are aware of those allegations.

My government has strongly denied those allegations in a statement made last night and the Iraqi government asked the Security Council to establish immediately a committee to investigate the situation in Kuwait. If the American authorities would like to use this pretext to justify their aggressive position, such a pretext has no grounds.

Badran

(Continued from page 1)

withdrawal and spare bloodshed...."

Asked how a ground war would affect Arab countries, especially those who were members of the U.S.-led coalition fighting Iraq, Mr. Badran said: "In my expectation, it will have huge negative repercussions."

He said that according to official information which Jordan had, both Syria and Egypt had welcomed the Soviet proposal and were convinced that war had to end at this stage.

"We have contacted our Arab brethren, including those in the alliance, and they were very happy at Iraq's agreement to withdraw from Kuwait."

"In my view, they are convinced by this Soviet step and I believe the conviction will grow that this war has become unnecessary, especially as the (allied) forces came to Saudi under the umbrella of defending Saudi Arabia and then to liberate Kuwait."

Mr. Badran said: "The Soviet initiative has mentioned withdrawal from Kuwait. But if the aim is to devastate Iraq, to bomb it, to kill its women, children and men, to smash its military might and economy, my expectations are that this will have huge negative repercussions."

Rana Sabbagh adds: Mr. Badran also said Jordan, which has contracted to buy 30,000 tonnes of petrol from Syria, took delivery of the first consignment Saturday.

"A credit line has been opened with the Syrians and we started taking delivery," Mr. Badran said.

"The first five trucks loaded with petrol and four others filled with gas arrived on Saturday and others are on their way."

He said Syria had agreed to sell Jordan 30,000 tonnes of petrol at market rates.

"This is one contract and is extendable, and as soon as they finish facilities (to load road tankers) at home, we shall start getting crude oil."

Badran said a newly-purchased tanker had started to load 100,000 tonnes of crude at a Yemeni port Saturday. It was expected to reach Aqaba by the end of the month and will anchor there as a storage vessel.

Officials have said Jordan was considering chartering 50,000-tonne tankers as resupply vessels.

Allied bombing of the main Amman-Baghdad highway and of almost 80 per cent of Iraqi oil refineries and installations had reduced Jordan's main oil supplies from Iraq to almost nothing.

"For two weeks, we have not received one single oil tanker from Iraq because of the air raids on the highway and damage done to Iraqi facilities," Mr. Badran said.

Before the Gulf crisis, Mr. Badran said, Jordan consumed 50,000 barrels of oil daily, but the influx of 300,000 Jordanians with 25,000 cars from Iraq, Kuwait and other Gulf states had pushed demand up to 65,000 barrels before rationing was introduced.

Officials have said consumption

has dropped by about 35 per cent since Jordan ordered motorists to use cars only on alternate days from early February. Ration coupons are also being printed.

Iraq provided Jordan with at least 60,000 barrels a day by truck at special rates before the Gulf war broke out on Jan. 17.

Iraq was supplying oil at 16.40 dollars per barrel — almost \$4 dollar less than current market rates — but no money actually changed hands as Baghdad was paying off its debt to Jordan incurred during the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war.

Mr. Badran said the debt now was down to \$236 million, down from what other officials said had exceeded \$1 billion at one point.

"In the past we paid no money to Iraq. Now we have to pay in dollars to Syria and Yemen," Mr. Badran said.

Officials said Jordan's fuel bill this year would be up to \$500 million for crude oil imports from non-Iraqi suppliers.

Soviets

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Mr. Ignatenko later told reporters Moscow's ties with Washington were unaffected by the crisis and Mr. Gorbachev enjoyed a strong personal relationship with Mr. Bush.

"Our relations have a very broad basis," he said.

Asked if the Kremlin would condemn an allied land attack against its former close ally, he said: "I think we will not express condemnation. We can only express sorrow that the world could not resolve this by peaceful means."

Assault

(Continued from page 1)

bigger than anything since World War II.

Correspondents on the Saudi front said earlier that U.S. forces had punched invasion gateways through Iraqi sand barricades. Ramparts up to three metres high were being breached all along the Saudi-Kuwait border.

Naval minesweeping operations moved closer to Kuwait's beaches to clear the way for a landing of a 17,000-man Marine amphibious force in the Gulf. As many as 80,000 Iraqi troops were said to be defending the beaches.

Even before the U.S. ultimatum passed Saturday, fighting had intensified along the Saudi-Kuwait border. U.S. marines and Iraqis reported inflicting heavy casualties on each other.

The intense activity on the battlefield came after two days of intense negotiations in Moscow between Mr. Aziz and President Gorbachev and other top Soviet officials.

During that time, Mr. Aziz agreed to a Soviet peace plan that was modified in an effort to win U.S. approval. Besides giving the Iraqis a longer time to pull out, the Soviet plan said U.N. resolutions would be cancelled after withdrawal.

The United States was demanding that withdrawal be completed within seven days, that Iraq comply with all U.N. provisions, that Iraqi forces be removed from Kuwait City and prisoners released within 48 hours, and that Iraq remove booby traps and mines from Kuwait. Baghdad called the ultimatum "shameful."

Egypt, a key Arab member of the U.S.-led anti-Iraq coalition, said Saturday it supported Mr. Bush's position.

"We stress our support for the demands of the coalition states included in the statement issued by the

United States of America for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait," a foreign ministry statement said.

The statement voiced appreciation of Soviet efforts for a peaceful end to the Gulf war but said the Kremlin proposal accepted by Iraq was inadequate.

Egypt's government-owned publications meanwhile said that President Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to remain in power in Iraq after the Gulf war.

"His staying would be an insult to the Arabs, a stab to peace and a blenheim on humanity," wrote Salah Montasser, editor of the weekly October.

The magazine cover carried a crossed-out closeup of President Saddam's face.

A similar demand for President Saddam's removal came in another government-owned weekly, Akhbar Al-Yom, the weekend version of the mass-circulation daily Al-Akhbar.

The calls came as Egyptian opposition groups disclosed they sent messages to President Hosni Mubarak and other anti-Iraq coalition leaders urging acceptance of the Soviet-Iraqi peace proposal.

Baghdad

(Continued from page 1)

The RCC in its statement called on the U.N. Security Council to form a neutral committee to inspect the damage in Kuwait and Iraq.

"While the infidel enemies have rejected and are rejecting the peace initiatives... we will seek to turn the ground war, which they have wanted, into a hellfire that will sear their scoundrels and a great crater of death into which their cohorts will fall," said a military communique.

Baghdad Radio said President Saddam Hussein met with the RCC and leaders of the Arab Baath Socialist Party.

Quoting sources "close to the council," the radio said the leaders discussed establishing "democratic national rule" in Kuwait if the Soviet plan was rejected.

The Iraqi News Agency said: "INA learned from sources close to the Revolutionary Command Council that the concerned officials are seriously studying the setting of democratic national rule in Kuwait in cooperation with religious and national tendencies hostile to imperialism and foreign dominance in case the United States and its allies reject the Soviet initiative."

The report appeared to suggest that Iraq, even as it contemplated withdrawal from Kuwait, remained opposed to the reinstatement of the emirate's monarchy. The allies have insisted that the monarchy return to power.

Baghdad was hit by bombs and missiles "sporadically during the day, with an intensification about 30 minutes before the deadline. Heavy bombing on Basra, Fao and other southern cities was reported late Saturday by Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

The military command said Iraqi forces shot down one allied plane, fired two missiles overnight at Saudi Arabia and pounded enemy troop positions with tactical field missile strikes.

Baghdad Radio said the allies were "incapable of mounting a

land battle without being routed."

"We have prepared ourselves for burning the bodies of the corrupt and evil invaders, and our revenge will be devastating and ruthless. This revenge will be merciless, merciless, merciless," it said in a commentary.

Iraq also urged its troops to "strike where it hurts."

Baghdad Radio called on more than a million troops entrenched on the southern front: "Strike at the enemy where it hurts."

"Strike and the whole of Iraq and the (Muslims) faithful will be on your side," the radio told front line forces. "Your families are waiting for you to return victorious... you are defending your families and homeland."

The communique accused the allies of rejecting peace initiatives to carry out a premeditated battle plan.

In another commentary Baghdad Radio denounced Mr. Bush as stupid and added: "It would have been possible to overlook this except for the fact that this madman... is the president of the United States."

Arafat

(Continued from page 1)

members of the anti-Iraq coalition such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

"In my opinion, if Iraq is stricken, no Arab will benefit from its participation in the coalition," Mr. Arafat said.

"Palestinians lashed out at U.S. President George Bush over his ultimatum to Iraq to quit Kuwait or face a massive land war."

"Who does he think he is, this dog Bush? Iraq should fight to the bitter end and teach him a lesson," one merchant said to another outside their shops on Saladin Street, Arab Jerusalem's main business district.

"Saddam would be stupid to accept Bush's conditions. It is better to die than to surrender to this animal," another middle-aged man said.

But on a hot Saturday afternoon, with Israeli police and other security forces patrolling the streets, the atmosphere among many Palestinians was sombre only hours before the U.S. deadline for Iraq.

They expressed fears that a ground war would send the turbulent Middle East into years of turmoil and deal another setback to the Palestinian cause."

Missiles

(Continued from page 1)

where the Scud or debris from the Scud might have landed.

Explosions were heard by residents in occupied Jerusalem and Tel Aviv after sirens sounded.

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens said Saturday that the Gulf war must go on, arguing that a quick ceasefire would leave Iraq with most of its army intact and in a position to threaten Israel.

"We are far from destroying the Iraqi war machine... and if he (Saddam Hussein) withdraw from Kuwait, he will still have part of his war machine and this can certainly cause a problem in the future," Mr. Arens said in an interview with Israel Radio.

Mr. Arens predicted that the allied forces would "crush" Iraq if the war continued.

Pentagon sued over ban on press access to war dead

Agencies

THE GOVERNMENT's ban on public access to the U.S. arrival of Gulf war dead is an unconstitutional bid to manipulate public opinion, according to a lawsuit filed Friday.

The policy aims to control media coverage of the war's effects and "limit the political and emotional impact that the deaths of Americans will have on the American public," said the suit filed in federal court by a group of journalists, veterans' organisations and a military family support group.

The government wants to avoid pictures of "rows of coffins lined up on the tarmac of Dover air force base," said Kate Martin, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the plaintiffs.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. district court for the District of Col-

umbia, seeks a preliminary injunction ordering the Department of Defence and the air force to allow the media and public to view the arrival of war dead at the base in Dover, Delaware.

Ms. Martin said that if the ground war begins this weekend, the plaintiffs will seek an immediate temporary restraining order.

The Defence Department announced in January it would no longer allow the media and public to view the arrivals, as it had following previous U.S. military actions such as those in Lebanon, Panama and Grenada.

Colonel Miguel Monteverde, director of Defence Information at the Department of Defence, said Friday there was no political motivation for the policy.

"It's not as though we're keeping from the American people the fact that there are casualties," he said.

The plaintiffs said the ban

violates the constitution's guarantee of freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Bobby Muller of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, said the government is trying to "insulate the American psyche from the human cost and the emotional devastation that war will certainly bring."

For 16 years, the public and the news media had been allowed on the Delaware base to witness the arrival of U.S. soldiers who died overseas.

But President George Bush complained in late 1989 when television networks split their screens to show him giving a White House news conference at the same time dead soldiers were arriving at the base as a result of the U.S. military invasion of Panama.

The base is the largest mortuary operated by the Defence Department, capable of putting into

caskets 100 bodies per day. It has storage space for 1,000 bodies.

Ms. Martin said the government was concerned that news coverage from the base would erode public support for the war.

"The only objective of the new policy is to limit news coverage and other speech that the government considers undesirable and to control and manipulate American public opinion," Ms. Martin said.

The Pentagon said it adopted the restrictions to protect the privacy of the families of the deceased soldiers.

But a representative of a private group that supports military families said the policy denies to the families the right to attend the traditional ceremonies honouring the dead soldiers.

The Justice Department, which will defend the Pentagon policy in court, had no comment.

Bush asks Congress for billions to pay for war

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President George Bush has asked Congress for \$12 billion plus authority to spend \$53.5 billion pledged by foreign countries to begin paying for the Gulf war.

White House officials said those amounts should be sufficient to cover the conflict's costs through March 31.

White House Budget Director Richard Darman warned that if Congress does not provide the requested money or if allied countries do not provide all the aid they have promised, "it may be necessary to seek additional foreign contributions and/or U.S. appropriations."

Additional funds also would be needed if the fighting extends beyond March 31.

Congress plans to begin considering the request next week. Congressional sources said they expect lawmakers to provide all the money needed to press the war effort.

The money would be raised through borrowing, not by raising taxes. Some members of Congress have said a war tax should be considered, but the idea has received little support.

Mr. Bush's request also contained the most detailed accounting to date of the war's price tag. According to White House documents, the confrontation with Iraq in this fiscal year will cost \$40 billion through March 31 — not including the actual costs of combat. Fiscal 1991 began last Oct. 1.

The White House estimated that the fighting is ranging in cost from \$150 million to \$1.65 billion daily. Officials provided no overall cost estimates for the combat, which began Jan. 17.

The White House papers released Friday estimated the costs of keeping U.S. troops in the Gulf at \$21.4 billion for October through March, including salaries, transportation, fuel and other

costs.

They estimated it would cost \$6.4 billion to buy replacement weapons and ammunition, \$7 billion to keep U.S. troops in the Gulf once the fighting ends, and \$5.2 billion to return soldiers to the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

So far, of the \$53.5 billion in aid the United States has been promised by other countries, \$14.9 billion has been received in cash, goods and services, the White House said.

The countries that have provided the most assistance so far have been Saudi Arabia, with \$10.5 billion, Kuwait, \$3.5 billion, Germany, \$3 billion, Japan, \$1.3 billion, and the United Arab Emirates, \$1 billion.

"If foreign commitments are fully honoured, and if hostilities end by March 31, the \$15 billion working capital account should be sufficient to cover the U.S. share of incremental costs," Mr.

Darman said.

"If these conditions are not met, however, it may be necessary to seek additional foreign contributions and U.S. appropriations," Mr. Darman said.

Mr. Darman, who has been struggling to cut into the massive federal budget deficit, said, "we've had very good results" in receiving foreign contributions to the war effort.

"Many countries are paying on time exactly as scheduled, and I would think that that will be the pattern in general," he said.

Mr. Darman said the daily cost of the war varies sharply each day, depending upon weather conditions and the magnitude of air raid missions against enemy targets.

Mr. Bush's request was likely to be approved by Congress, which seldom would challenge funding for Americans in combat, despite mounting U.S. deficit problems.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

04:49 Fajr
06:07 (Sunrise) Duha
11:49 Dhuhur
15:01 'Asr
17:31 Maghrib
18:49 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifich Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628343
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811293
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654932.

WEATHER

200 women decry ultimatum in front of Iraq embassy

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Feelings of gloom and suspense dominated the atmosphere here Saturday morning before the U.S. ultimatum for Iraq to quit Kuwait at 19:00 local time expired. While 200 Jordanian women held a rally in support for Iraq in front of the Iraqi embassy from 7:30 to 19:00, most Ammanites both in downtown and the hills were visibly apprehensive about the beginning of the ground war between Iraq and the coalition of 28 nations, which people expected would begin in a matter of hours. While many Jordanians were glued to their radios most of

the afternoon others did not want to hear any news. "I don't want to know what happens because I have no say in it anyway," said shopkeeper Mohammad Samahi. A group of men near the Al Hussein Mosque in downtown Amman said they were on their way to prayers as the deadline for the ultimatum approached. "We will pray for Saddam. We will pray for Iraq and the defeat of the foreign invaders in Arabia," said an elderly man as he moved towards the mosque.

While most of the capital remained quiet as the deadline approached, the 200 women in front of the Iraqi embassy sang nationalistic songs and chanted

pro-Iraqi slogans in solidarity with the Iraq. Fearing that demonstrators may march on the American embassy, police doubled security patrols and sealed off the streets leading up the hill to the embassy.

"In the eyes of every foreigner I see Israel," said Umm Mahmoud Samhouri, who had come from Jabal Al Hussein's refugee camp to rally in support of Iraq.

Anti-Western feeling was high as women called on Iraq to defend itself to the last moment against the onslaught of the U.S.-led allied forces. "There will be no capitulation by the Iraqis, there will only be coffins with American

soldiers going to Washington," shouted one woman.

"We were hoping that the U.S. will accept the Gorbachev peace proposal," said Emile Nafaa. "But now there is no hope for peace. America wants to destroy Iraq... We appeal to all women and people everywhere to end this war now by accepting the Soviet peace proposals."

Five minutes before the deadline expired news arrived that Iraq had launched yet another missile on Israel. As many of the women yodded in jubilation, one passer by said: "Tell Bush this war is not over yet."

Al Tahrir widens Arab struggle

By Saeeda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The only way to achieve victory for the Arab and Muslim nations is to open all fronts and move Arab armies to fight Jews in Palestine, the Golan Heights, Lebanon and the "crusaders" in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf, a seminar sponsored by Al Tahrir (Liberation) Islamic Party concluded. In a six-point memorandum, the participants also called for the cut-off of all political, economic and commercial relations with all countries participating in the aggression on Iraq. The memorandum also called on all Arab and Islamic countries to boycott the United Nations and its Security Council and their resolutions. It also called for the liquidation

of the interests of all countries participating in the war against Iraq, the unification of all countries with Iraq, demanding Iraq, Libya and Algeria to stop all supply to all U.S.-led alliance countries.

The conference, which was held Wednesday upon the invitation of Islamic Liberation Party (Al Tahrir), was attended by several Islamic delegations and groups as well as deputies in the Lower House of Parliament. Among the participants were representatives of the Iraqi embassy in Amman, a delegation of the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (ISF) headed by Sheikh Ali Aliche, and more than 2,000 attendees.

Participants stressed essentially the role of the Arab peoples in

supporting Iraq by exerting pressure on their leaders and their governments to go for Jihad. Bahjat Abu Gharbieh of the Democratic National Alliance proposed, in addition to Jihad, to attack all United States' and its allies' interests, cutting off any supplies by closing roads, and considering the 17th of every month as a day of demonstration, prayers and sit-ins for Iraq.

Ali Aliche, ISF representative, pointed to the Algerian people's sympathetic sentiments and suffering with the Arab and Islamic peoples in this decisive war. He also stressed that there were more than one million volunteers in Algeria ready to fight and stand with Iraq.

Leith Shbeilat, a deputy in the Lower House of Parliament, in-

sisted upon the importance of our role and the duty on us to mobilise the Egyptian street, and to put pressure on the Libyan government to stop supplying oil, and on Iran for its neutral position and for supplying oil for France, the biggest ally of America. He also criticised several governments' positions in this war and called for the need to carry out provocative measures to force Israel to enter the war.

Most of the participants have stressed that time has come to 'act' and not only to 'talk' and hold conferences. In all their speeches, attendees' enthusiasm echoed throughout the Nahateen hall where they chanted several Islamic slogans, interrupting lecturers from time to time by crying "Allahu Akbar."

Committee makes first contribution to Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian Popular Committee for Supporting the Iraqi People in the Face of Foreign Aggression Saturday presented the government with a cheque for JD 10,000 at the first installment of contribution to benefit the Iraqi people.

The cheque was handed to Prime Minister Mudar Badran in a ceremony by Mr. Amin Shugair, the committee's secretary general and committee members. The prime minister voiced the government's appreciation to the committee for its contribution and for its continued efforts to raise funds that would alleviate

the sufferings of the Iraqi people. Shugair said that his committee's efforts were augmenting those of other groups and organisations operating in the same field in Jordan to raise funds in a show of solidarity with the Iraqi people.

On Feb. 19, a Palestinian American paid JD 50,000 at an auction for a metal cone said to be part of a U.S. missile recovered from Iraq after an allied attack and the sum was intended to purchase badly needed medicines for the Iraqi people.

The auction organisers in Amman claimed the cone was part of

a Tomahawk cruise missile recovered after an attack on Jordanian oil tanker trucks inside Iraq. The auction was the second stage in Amman for pieces of all-aid warplanes or rocket missile fragments recovered in Iraq since the start of the massive multinational air raids on Jan. 17.

Part of the wing of a downed U.S. warplane was sold in another auction earlier this month for JD 21,500. The money was said to be supporting national efforts to provide medicine and food for the Iraqi people especially children.

The Popular Committee for

Supporting Iraq is reported to be continuing its mission, with teams knocking on doors and approaching people on the street for donations. Local communities in villages and towns around the Kingdom were also holding bazaars and selling different products with the proceeds benefiting the victims of the allied air raids in Iraq.

A soccer match between Al Faisali and Wihdat clubs was organised at the Amman stadium Friday resulting in the latter's defeat by four goals to nil. The proceeds of the game, which amounted to nearly JD 7,000, will also benefit the Iraqi people.

Green spokesman outlines resistance

Lawzi, Arabiyat explain Jordan stand to French, German parliamentarians

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan under the leadership of His Majesty King Hussein is strongly opposed to war and aggression of any form; and the Kingdom continues to work for the establishment of a just and honourable peace which can guarantee stability, security and freedom for all countries in the region, according to Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi.

Speaking at a meeting with visiting parliamentarians from Germany's Green Party, Lawzi said that Iraq was facing an international conspiracy led by the United States which insists on destroying Iraq despite that country's favourable response to U.N. Security Council Resolution 660. The allied forces' current stand does not reflect the coalition's declared intention of upholding the international legality, said Lawzi.

Referring to the situation in the occupied Arab territories, Lawzi said that the Green Party group must have familiarised themselves with the facts and must have witnessed the repressive and inhuman treatment of the Palestinian people at the hand of the Israeli occupation forces.

Israel has lost its intensified its repressive campaigns against the defenceless population, taking advantage of the fact that the world's eyes are now turned towards the Gulf, Lawzi said.

He told the group that more than 1.5 million Palestinians were facing increasing arbitrary actions which were making their life impossible under occupation.

A spokesman for the visiting group told Lawzi that Bonn was facing intensive pressure from the United States to force Germany to participate in the coalition arrayed against Iraq.

The Americans are constantly reminding the Germans of their aid after World War II in the face of the so-called Soviet expansionist designs, but the Green Party along with other German groups are resisting all American pressure, he said.

The Green Party has been holding intensive contacts with all groups to fight off the American pressure and has maintained contacts with the military to demand that they refuse orders to go to the Gulf, the group's spokesman said at the meeting which was attended by several House members.

Later at a meeting with Lower House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Latif Arabiyat, the spokesman repeated the Green Party position and said that its members had been instrumental in organising anti-war demonstrations in German cities.

What the Americans and their allies are doing in the Gulf now, he said, is a war of genocide

against the Iraqi people, and a crime for the destruction of Iraq.

He said this was bound to deepen hatred among nations for years to come.

Referring to the situation in the occupied territories, the spokesman said that the Green Party could not accept continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The stability in the region, he said, could only come through the settlement of all the region's problems.

Arabiyat echoed Lawzi's call for the need to end the Gulf war by peaceful means.

He voiced the Jordanian people's appreciation of the German people's stand and hoped that Germany's policy towards the region could be copied by other European nations so that the foundations of real peace in the region could be established.

Lawzi and Arabiyat also held separate meetings with visiting French parliamentarians, urging them to help change their government's present stance vis-a-vis the Gulf war and helping the world to have peace.

The war in the Gulf constitutes one of the most dangerous moments in the region's history, because it is a devastating and unjust war designed to destroy the Iraqi people, Iraq's military and economic infrastructure and cultural heritage, said Lawzi at

the meeting attended by House members.

In the light of the Franco-Arab relations and unique relations between the French and Arab people, we feel that France is the Arab World's partner in the peace-making process to end the sufferings of mankind resulting from this war, and Jordan hopes that France would play a leading role conforming to the principles of the great French revolution, Lawzi said.

For his part, Arabiyat told the delegation which represents the French National Assembly that Jordan hoped that France would revise its present position and work towards achieving peace and security based on justice.

What is taking place in the Gulf is destruction and killing, and this by no means reflect the international legality, Arabiyat noted.

"While Iraq announced its acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolution 660 to end the war, President Bush and the Israeli prime minister announced their rejection of the Soviet proposals and declared their intention of destroying Iraq," said Arabiyat.

He urged France to reexamine its present position and to support just peace.

The speeches were followed by dialogues in which members of the two Houses participated.

Poll shows Jordanians expect Iraqi victory

AMMAN (J.T.) — An opinion poll conducted by the Public Opinion Centre (Arah Press) in Amman in the past week showed that the majority of Jordanians firmly believe that Iraq is capable of dealing a defeat to the U.S.-led coalition in the Gulf conflict in a ground battle.

The poll, the fourth in a series of surveys to determine Jordanian people's views about various issues covered 200 people picked randomly from various sectors in Jordan. Questionnaires distributed asked the public to give views about the Gulf conflict, its reasons and expectations about the consequences.

Arah Press said that 96 per cent of those asked to give their views believed that the U.S. allied coalition gives little attention to Kuwait itself and that the coalition was intent only on destroying Iraq's capabilities and preventing the emergence of Arab unity.

These, they said, are the main reasons for launching war on Iraq.

At least 95 per cent said they believed the Western media continues to mislead world public opinion by giving false promises to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict once the Gulf war ends. They said that the West, which created Israel and nurtured the Jewish state, could by no means convince the Arab Nation of its intention to settle the Palestine question.

The poll also reflected the change of views, with regard to major nations of the world.

Before the Gulf conflict, 50 per cent of the public looked up to Japan with respect, declining to 20 per cent after Tokyo decided to support the coalition in the war, while the Soviet Union maintained the same respect among Jordanians as before.

With regard to France, its involvement in the war prompted 63 per cent of the Jordanian people to change their views about it and most Jordanians now regard France as an enemy of the Arab Nation.

All those participating in the poll maintained their position with regard to the United States and Britain, both of which enjoy little respect, because they are regarded here as hostile nations before and after the involvement in the war against Iraq and because of their continued support for Israel, which maintains its occupation of Arab land.

The poll showed that the majority of the Jordanian people were not affected by the influence of the Western media and propaganda campaigns during the Gulf war crisis and that members of the public in Jordan proved difficult to deceive; and that the Jordanians are firmly behind the Iraqi people regardless of sacrifices.

Industrial investments stalled

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC) says that it has received no application from any Arab or foreign sources to start new businesses at the industrial city of Sahab or at the Irbid industrial city since the outbreak of the Gulf crisis last August.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted corporation officials as saying that the JIEC has not even received any requests for information concerning the facilities and privileges offered to investors and industrialists in the Kingdom over the past six months.

It is hard to conduct an exact estimate of the losses inflicted on the Jordanian industrial sector because of the Gulf crisis, but rough estimates say that they exceed JD 100 million, according to the officials said.

They said that the Gulf war has made things even worse for the Jordanian industry which has been counting on exports to Gulf countries and Iraq which no more import any of the Jordanian products.

The JIEC officials said that the high cost of production, resulting from insurance surcharges im-

posed by shipping companies, harassment of cargo vessels heading for Aqaba, the high cost of primary materials needed for industrial processes and difficulties facing the transit trade between Jordan and Arab states, have all contributed to this state of affairs in the Kingdom.

Indeed, factories which have been organising shifts for their workers have now dropped to two or one, a situation which called for the reduction of the number of workers in general, the officials said.

Petra quoted businessmen and industrialists as saying that they were willing to contribute towards bolstering the national economy and were careful not to aggravate the unemployment problem and therefore they have asked their employees to take their annual leaves or leaves without pay for the time being until matters clear up.

However, they say that other firms had to lay off workers because business was too hard to keep any of them.

Difficulties facing industries have naturally prompted investors from Jordan and abroad to refrain from undertaking any

venture for the moment thereby offering no new job opportunities for the thousands of job seekers in the country, said these officials.

According to JIEC statistics, industries worst affected by the prevailing situation are pharmaceuticals, wood and metal work, chemical as well as industries of construction materials. Some of these industries have already closed down due to the lack of raw materials which have been imported from other countries.

A number of industrialists and businessmen and officials at the Ministry of Industry and Trade have been offering proposals for intensifying efforts to find new markets for Jordan abroad or to pool the efforts and resources of groups of industries forming corporate firms that can help overcome the difficulties.

The Sahab Industrial City on the outskirts of Amman has more than 500 factories and industrial businesses, and at least JD 100 million were invested in them. More than 5,000 people were working at these factories and businesses in Sahab before the Gulf crisis erupted.

Environmental awareness to become focus in schools

AMMAN (J.T.) — The new school curricula and textbooks at Jordanian schools focus children's attention on the need for the protection of the environment, because the Ministry of Education realises the important role of instilling in the minds of the new generation environmental education that would benefit the future of the Kingdom and the world at large, according to Ministry of Education Secretary-General Munther Al Masri.

Environmental education can be traced in textbooks dealing with science, social studies and civics at government and private schools, Masri said in an address at the opening of a five-day symposium on environmental education.

The whole world is giving due attention to the problems of the environment and directing attention towards preventing pollution to the soil, water and the atmosphere to ensure continued survival for mankind, Dr. Masri noted in his address at the symposium attended by representatives from the public and private organisations.

Jordan's participation in numerous international conferences and His Majesty King Hussein's sustained policies and directives towards protecting the environment in Jordan and the King's warnings of the danger of pollution to the atmosphere as a result of the Gulf conflict stand out as significant indicators projecting the country's deep concern to safeguard the environment, Masri added.

Last June Jordan was among 56 nations which attended an international conference on protecting the environment which was held in London. Participating countries pledged to launch close cooperation among themselves to protect the

environment and fight pollution.

The Director of the Ministry of Education's Curricula Department Ahmad Hyasat spoke at the outset of the opening session, outlining the symposium's objectives and noting that the participants would focus attention on Jordan's environment in terms of problems and solutions, as well as the adoption of a national strategy on environmental education for Jordan.

Hyasat voiced the ministry's satisfaction with the level of cooperation between the private and public sectors in helping to save off the dangers of pollution, and noted that the ministry's curricula and textbooks are bound to play a major role in this field by educating students in environ-

mental affairs at the basic and secondary stages.

The five-day symposium was organised by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and attended by participants from the ministries of information, municipal and rural affairs and the environment, industry and trade, agriculture, health, tourism, as well as four Jordanian universities.

According to the organisers, several working papers concerning environmental education in Jordan and a strategy and working plan to develop such education and incorporate it within general educational plans will be reviewed by the participants.

Jordanian handicraft exhibition opens Tuesday

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan Design and Trade Centre will hold a three-day exhibition of unique and fashionable Jordanian-made handicrafts starting Tuesday. Fifty per cent of the proceeds will be given to support Iraq.

The exhibition, which will be held at the Intercontinental Hotel's lobby, will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day. The Jordan Design and Trade Centre was recently established under the umbrella of the National Handicraft Development Project, an activity initiated in 1988 by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation to create employment and increase income among low-income communities in Jordan through a business-oriented, market development approach to handicraft production. The project currently reaches over 800 individuals throughout the King-

dom and has established markets locally and in Europe and the United States. Within the past two years, sales, employment and income have tripled among most handicraft groups participating in the project.

The Jordan Design and Trade Centre serves as a link between Jordanian artisans and the international marketplace. Wholesale buyers place orders form the samples they see exhibited, or work with the Centre's design staff to develop their own exclusive lines. Weavers and embroiderers work continuously on the Centre's premises to experiment in combining traditional designs with contemporary styles and to complete new samples. The Centre also provides training in such areas as production management, quality control, dyeing and finishing.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

Kilani meets Iraqi academics

AMMAN (Petra) — Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Ibrahim Zeid Al Kilani received in his office Saturday President of Saddam University for Islamic Sciences, Dr. Bashir Ma'rouf, and Dean of Imam Abu Hanifah College, Dr. Ahmad Al Qubeisi. Kilani reviewed with Ma'rouf and Qubeisi bilateral relations between Jordan and Iraq. Ma'rouf lauded Jordan's stand in supporting Iraq in countering aggression and commended efforts exerted by the Ministry of Awqaf in unifying the ranks of the Arab and Muslim nations. The meeting was attended by the ministry's Secretary-General Ahmad Hilayel.

JCO training course starts

AMMAN (Petra) — A training course for new employees at the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO) started Saturday at JCO's institute. The course aims at acquainting the employees with the concept of cooperation, its principles and the duties of the organisation. JCO Director-General Jamal Al Bedour said in a speech he delivered at the opening ceremony that the role of the organisation should be developed so that it can face the challenges of the future and to be able to adapt to the changes. The development process, he said, could be attained by developing the organisation as a whole, not only by developing the administrative staff.

Haul of drugs end in flames

AMMAN (J.T.) — A haul of drugs were burnt at the Jordan Cement Factory Company kilns Saturday, and according to the Public Security Department (PSD) the illicit merchandise had a street value estimated at JD 2.8 million. Brig. Izzeddin Zaza, director of the PSD's anti-narcotics department said that the drugs that were burnt included 2,810 kilograms of hashish, 817 grammes of heroin, 32.4 grammes of opium, 420 captagon drug tablets, and 87 saplings of the hashish plant. He said that these drugs were seized by his department in a number of drug smuggling and drug trafficking cases. Representatives of the judicial authorities and PSD were present at the burning of the drugs.

Jerusalem body unveils Israeli scheme

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Royal Commission on Jerusalem Affairs, Akram Zu'eir, said Saturday the Housing Ministry of the Israeli occupation authorities has started building 100 apartments in Jabal Al Mukabbir area in occupied Jerusalem. He said the Israeli authorities have exploited the Gulf war to speed the process of building settlements in occupied Arab Jerusalem.

CONDOLENCES

The editor and staff of the Jordan Times deeply mourn the passing in Germany last week of

Gunther Heun

Uncle of their colleague and friend Mariam Shahin, and brother of Dr. and Mrs. Majdi Shahin. May his soul rest in peace

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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 667171/6, 670141-4
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Limits of beastly war

PRESIDENT GEORGE Bush's ultimatum to Iraq to pull out on humiliating terms is nothing but an obstinate move aimed to abort Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's peace initiative. If Washington's true objective is to intimidate Iraq into submission, then all the blood and destruction that would ensue from such a policy will have to be the responsibility of the U.S. and its allies. The tone and contents of Bush's ultimatum are drafted in such a way as to leave Iraq no choice but to continue to defend itself against the allied aggression. And with Washington's aims so clearly going beyond the liberation of Kuwait, it is up to the Soviet Union and all free, peace-loving nations to stand up to this Western design with equal determination. Moscow and the Soviet president can ill-afford such humiliation at the hands of Washington and President Bush. What is at stake here is not only Iraq but also the so-called new international order which appears now to be totally at the mercy of Washington's White House. Iraq is, and remains, to be a Third World country that cannot be expected to stand up to Western tyranny. If Iraq is allowed to succumb to such a tyranny with Moscow and Peking and other powerful capitals simply gazing with indifference into the sky, then they could be next on the West's list of countries that need to behave or otherwise face the consequences. Now is therefore the time to put an end to this rule of the jungle where the strong and the warmongers call the shots and the others must bow with disgrace and humiliation.

Unfortunately, neither the Arab countries opposed to the Gulf war nor the non-Western capitals are making their voices heard strongly enough. In the face of this deterioration in the international order, all concerned countries, especially the Soviet Union, must stick to their guns at the U.N. Security Council to pre-empt and resist the whims and dictates of Washington. Above all it is incumbent on the Soviets to back their words and agreements with deeds and actions that can put an end to this beastly war immediately. The Soviet Union cannot possibly afford to relinquish its role as an honest broker and arbiter on behalf of the Third World countries, especially at this hour and in view of the massive effort that it has already exerted on behalf of peace in the Gulf.

Meanwhile, Iraq has no alternative but to persevere and defend itself at whatever cost. We know from experience that Iraq will not capitulate. It has accepted terms for honourable peace and will continue to adhere to its word, regardless of the odds. For their serious endeavours and huge sacrifices to save for the Arabs their dignity and integrity, the Iraqis can only be respected and supported without limits. This is a crucial hour for the whole world, especially Arabs, to realise what is at stake here.



ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i daily said in an editorial Saturday that both King Hussein who advocated a peaceful settlement at the outset of the Gulf crisis in August and the Iraqi President who has not accepted the Soviet proposals for peace are clearly oriented towards a peaceful settlement. The King summoned the heads of Arab diplomatic missions in Amman to urge them to unify their efforts to help reach a peaceful settlement and retain pan-Arab solidarity, while the Iraqi president sent his foreign minister to Moscow to announce Baghdad's acceptance of the peace proposals for ending the war, the paper noted. To counter all these peace bids, U.S. President George Bush has declared new threats against Iraq and announced his humiliating demands which he imposed on the Iraqi leadership, hoping to achieve an Iraqi capitulation, the paper pointed out. It said that by issuing his ultimatum to Baghdad, Bush is clearly trying to abort the Soviet peace proposal and to foil the Jordanian and Iraqi peace efforts. What is more, the American president has proved that his war on Iraq was not, as he had claimed, designed to evict the occupying forces but rather to destroy Iraq and the Iraqi military might, the paper said. This is clear, said the paper, because Bush's adamant position is being backed by Israel whose prime minister has been urging the U.S. administration to annihilate Iraq's military machinery and oust Saddam Hussein from power so that the Jewish state's well being can be safeguarded.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily calls on the government to demand that foreign trucks passing through Jordanian territory should pay in foreign currency the JD 40 toll imposed on each vehicle passing in transit in accordance with the latest government rule. Nazih says that the government's rule also imposed further charges on extra diesel oil exceeding 200 litres consumed by these vehicles passing through Jordan, and these too should be paid in hard currency. The non-Jordanian refrigerator trucks and other vehicles which pass through Jordan have always enjoyed the facilities offered them by the local authorities including the purchases of fuel which has been subsidised by the government, and therefore it is only fair now to demand that these vehicles pay charges in hard currency which Jordan uses to purchase the fuel from abroad. The writer notes that under the present difficult circumstances and in view of the fact that Jordan is finding it increasingly difficult to buy oil products, charging the foreign trucks fees in hard currency is justified.

Letter from Baghdad

By Shamil Kubba

IRAQ has become a massive killing field. From the very start of the war, the anti-Iraqi coalition has indiscriminately showered Iraqi cities with nearly everything in its lethal arsenal bar nuclear weapons. The seemingly deliberate targeting by "precision-guided munitions" of innocent civilians and non-military structures such as homes, bridges, bomb shelters, churches, mosques, museums and government buildings (under the guise of "collateral damage"), is deplorable and contravenes all recognised international norms and laws.

Yet news of the way the Iraqi people are coping with this tragedy and the effect on the nation's moral, has been almost non-existent. People of all nationalities, living in Jordan and other parts of the world, who have family, relatives and friends in Iraq, wait anxiously, hoping for even the smallest bit of information to filter out. With the telecommunications system down, no telephones, telex, fax or general mail has been able to get through. Many of the families in Jordan have been receiving desperate phone calls from relatives and friends all over the world, asking for news of people they know back in Iraq.

Some fortunate families have been able to partially overcome this "black out" of their loved ones, by offering cash inducements to truck or bus drivers willing to risk their lives, journeying the Amman-Baghdad road to take messages, food and other essentials. Others have not been so lucky.

Below are excerpts from a letter by an Iraqi housewife and mother of three, living in the Moosour District of Baghdad, and written to relatives residing in Amman, Jordan. The document is dated Feb. 13, the same day that American planes savagely "precision bombed" the Amirya bomb shelter with the resultant death of well over 300 innocent men, women and children. The letter is interesting because it articulates and highlights the pent up emotions of ordinary citizens — particularly the buildup of resentment and hatred towards the American administration and its allies, for their callous attempt at destroying Iraq through their non-stop barbaric bombardment. One must keep in mind however, that the warring parties in this conflict, are not people, but governments. And, as numerous peace demonstrations around the world clearly illustrate, the majority of these governments are blindly stringing behind the shadow of the U.S. administration, acting contrary to the wishes and interests of their own people.

The letter begins with: "I send you warm greetings from beloved Baghdad; a Baghdad that stands steadfast and united in the face of an immoral onslaught by its enemies who are striving to obliterate its metre by metre and day by day. They are destroying the very fabric of our beloved city with vengeance, shamelessness and without remorse."

We were really thrilled to receive your letter today. With each new day we thank Allah that we are still alive and well (together) in the midst of our relatives and loved ones. They (the allies) are desperately trying to rob us of our dreams and aspirations; they seek to deprive us of our today and our tomorrow. They bombard our nation's national heritage daily with incredible enmity and hatred. And yet in the midst of this blitz, an unjust world lamely and pathetically looks on in a conspiracy of silence to witness the most barbarous massacre in centuries.

Only two leaders have previously been able to destroy this great nation: one was Holako, and the other is the vile Bush. History may forgive Holako because he was known to be illiterate barbarian and a pagan and thus totally uncivilised. But what will the world and history have to say of the despicable President Bush who boasts of being civilised and who is head of the most powerful and advanced country in the world? He has the audacity to preach democracy, human rights, justice and honour and claim to be a supporter of the wronged and the aggrieved.

Bush tells an unsuspecting world that he came to liberate Kuwait, but where is Kuwait in relation to Baghdad or Mosul or Ramadi (which are located hundreds of kilometres from Kuwait)? What is the connection between civilian bridges in these cities which are being pounded daily, to the liberation of Kuwait? Also, what relevance is the liberation of Kuwait to the women and children that are dying daily (from allied bombardment) under the rubble of their own houses? Where is the connection between liberating Kuwait and the killing of innocent men and women obtaining water from the Tigris River — by cluster bombs, which are blatant violations of international law. And what does one say to the innocent children who are disfigured and maimed by pens, balls, and toys dropped from allied planes and which are designed to explode in their face when picked up or touched? What has the liberation of Kuwait to do with the poor civilians that are burned alive in their vehicles as they try to escape from the bombs that are showered upon them?

Dear God, where is your justice, and where is this so called "civilised world"? Each day, the heart is filled with hatred and abhorrence at the atrocities of these despicable criminals, who try to coerce us into submission. I include Arab traitors in this category, such as the tyrant leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria. The horror and pain our country is being subjected to, tempts me to dislike all Arabs because instead of supporting us, they look on like feeble spectators.

But God does not forget the faithful who believe in him, and the God is all powerful. God will make us victorious. How often in history, the few have been victorious over the many, with the help of Allah?

We pray that our beloved God shields the Iraqi people from all harm, and makes our army victorious over the treacherous enemy. Let us hope that God will restore to the infidels their logic and compassion. Yet, no matter what, Iraq will continue to stand tall and proud. It will maintain its high values, unwavering faith and steadfastness. God will preserve and shield us as long as our hearts are filled with the fear of God and as long as the heart renews: God is very great."

Then as if to sooth the worries of her relatives in Amman, she continues:

"Please feel assured that we are all right. We are able to take care of ourselves with help of God who watches over us during these terrible times. We are quickly adapting to our conditions in spite of the many difficulties we are faced with. One of the few benefits of this war is the strengthening of personal ties and return to simple life and nature — now we ride bicycles and walk which is healthy and good. Also, life in the shelter is reasonably comfortable because it has a generator which works for six hours every evening and we pass the time playing cards, backgammon and watching video films."

In conclusion the Iraqi housewife and mother tells her relatives:

"Do not worry for us, for no harm shall befall us, except that which is willed by Allah. And we shall meet again soon, even though it sometimes seems that we may never meet again. Love..."

In a footnote, she adds: "Please don't send letters with the driver for delivery to others as it is very difficult to relay them at present due to the absence of telephones, petrol, etc."

Why Arabs failed to unite

By Khalid Nusseibeh

IT is germane to venture the question as to why divisions in the Arab World are rife when it enjoys a degree of cultural consensus rooted in religion, common historical experience and language, and racial affinity — admired to the point of envy by other societies. The mosaic that exists in the Arab society represented by, for instance, Christian communities in the Levant and Berbers in North Africa exist within the framework of a great deal of homogeneity.

In an interview with Rami Khouri on Jordan Television, a French official visiting Jordan acknowledged the divided boundaries created in the wake of World War I Sykes-Picot, treaty between the British and the French but posed the question as to why — as the Europeans are doing — does not the Arab World forge a political unity in conditions of freedom and open discussion. Against the background of the current Arab internecine war this is

indeed a difficult question to answer.

Where the tapestry of European history is replete with religious, racial and civil conflict — in the Arab World such sources of dissension are far less. One may recall several universal states, spanning many centuries, in the history of the area (Umayyad, Abbasid, Ottoman) which subordinated the forces of division to a larger political entity, and where the mosaic of ethnic and religious configuration was effectively assimilated and absorbed by the universal caliphate state.

Amid the intense feelings generated by the Gulf conflict, sadly, little is said about the aftermath, in terms of inter-Arab relations. The scourge of war includes the wounds that will continue to fester after the fighting is over.

In Arab Islamic history, the early conflict between Imam Ali (the fourth successor of the Prophet Muhammad) and his supporters on one side and Muawiyah on the other was the

cause of much bloodletting that entailed consequences which we continue to live with today. The schism within Islam between Sunnism and Shiism is an instance of such scars. Moreover, one of the obstacles to the assimilation of Persia within the Ottoman state was the existence of Shi'i Islam.

There is sometimes uncertainty in referring to history to illustrate a modern situation, for one because exact repetition does not exist in history. Still it is clear that the medieval crusades were stimuli for an awakening, in terms of spiritual and moral regeneration as well as political unity. At present, the Western military encroachment and the sentiments among Arabs and Muslims around the world that it is evoking conjures the images of indignation that preceded the liberation of Jerusalem, during the era of Saladin.

One of the positive implications of the Gulf crisis is the vast appearances of solidarity we are witnessing among the people of North Africa to Iraq.

Ironically, it is the Western media in its daily coverage of the Gulf war that is helping to bring forth a surge in Arab and Islamic solidarity. However much the divergences in geography and politics, the psychic unity between the western Arab World and the eastern part is unmistakable.

Undoubtedly, relations between humans and states are characterised by harmony when there is a mutual commitment to a form of justice. When we pose the question as to why Arab unity does not exist — as we must — one has to look for causes such as economic injustice where a minority of oil rich states have control over vast wealth while other far more populated countries are impoverished. As the Arab World deals with the scars left by the current conflict, the imperative of forging a more just economic order where there is distributive justice is a prerequisite to continuing the struggle for building the shattered blocks of Arab unity.

In U.S. and Iraq, shared disbelief over U.S. war aims

By Bernd Debusmann
Reuter

WASHINGTON — After more than a month of relentless bombing which has reportedly laid waste to Iraq's infrastructure, Americans and Iraqis have little in common but shared disbelief that the war is about Kuwait.

Officially, the U.S. administration insists it has no intention of going beyond the United Nations resolution which gave a green light to use force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, seized in a lightning strike on Aug. 2.

When he announced the start of the war on Jan. 16, President George Bush declared that "our goal is not the conquest of Iraq but the liberation of Kuwait."

But since then, "almost all Americans have come to understand that the objective is no longer Kuwait. It is Saddam Hussein," said Rashid Khalidi of Chicago University's Centre for Middle Eastern Studies.

In Iraq, as well, a growing number of people are convinced that the war is meant to destroy the government and President Saddam Hussein, judging from conversations with dozens of people during a recent nine-day visit.

Many educated Iraqis are sceptical of the state-run media and prefer to get their news from foreign radio stations. But one persistent line of government information analysis is striking a receptive chord: The allies went to war to prevent Iraq from growing into a major military and economic force — and to remove Saddam.

It is an assessment shared by leading U.S. experts on the Middle East.

"Very early on after the bombing began, we (the United States) began using it as an instrument to achieve broader objectives that have nothing to do with Kuwait," said Yahia Sadowski, a Middle East expert at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

"Crippling Iraq's military capability to play a role in the region in the future. Crippling the economic capability to sustain that sort of military role."

Bush himself provided evidence of the changed war aims, Sadowski said, by encouraging Iraqis to overthrow Saddam.

On Tuesday, the U.S. president shrugged off a Soviet peace plan reported to provide for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait in return for Moscow's commitment to oppose any moves to dismantle the structure of the Iraqi state and "punish" Saddam for the war.

Bush said the Soviet plan, worked out as preparations for an allied ground offensive gathered pace, fell short of U.S. requirements. "The goals have been set out... I'm not going to give," he said.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Some experts say that turning Saddam's removal into the undeclared but widely-understood objective of the Gulf war makes it easier to pursue a conflict which otherwise might have sparked popular opposition.

According to the latest public opinion poll, 78 per cent of Americans approve of the U.S. having gone to war.

According to Sadowski, painting the Gulf conflict as a war against evil represented by Saddam is a technique with a proven track record in the United States, "a country which is very dubious about the strategic rationale of U.S. intervention in the Third World."

"Bush did the same with (General Manuel Antonio) Noriega in Panama," Sadowski said. "We weren't at war with Panama, we were at war with Noriega."

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Peace prospects rekindle hopes for economic recovery

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

JORDAN's economy was not at its best before the Gulf crisis. It was undergoing a tough adjustment programme, supervised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The standard of living was already 40 per cent below the level of 1987 and unemployment ranged between 16 to 20 per cent of the labour force and new investments were at a standstill.

During the first five months of the crisis before the shooting war, Jordan suffered a lot. Only the Kuwaiti economy suffered more. In one strike Jordan lost all the Arab aid that was flowing at the rate of \$400 to \$600 million a year, half of the expatriates' remittances and one third of its export market. Internally, the major victims were the sectors of tourism, transport, external trade and agriculture.

In other words, most of the possible losses under war have actually taken place before the war.

Two major risks were always under consideration: Israeli intervention and interruption of oil supplies from Iraq. After two weeks of active war, the risk of the Israeli aggression subsided. If Israel is not allowed to retaliate to painful Iraqi strikes at the heart of its capital, most likely it will not be allowed to initiate an aggression against Jordan. The Arab coverage provided by the continued Syrian and Egyptian participation in the coalition against Iraq is more valuable to America than Israeli direct assistance in the war efforts.

The flow of Iraqi oil to Jordan continued under war conditions for two weeks but at a lower level. In the last two days of January, American fighters struck against Jordanian oil tankers without warning. They killed 14 drivers and injured 30.

On second thought, America expressed regret for the incident and the tankers resumed their activity. This time, the American fighters did not only hit the Jordanian tankers but also struck against the loading facilities in Iraq to render Jordanian importation of Iraqi oil impossible.

Due to the lack of storage facilities Jordan does not maintain huge oil reserves and civilian needs are covered for around three weeks of normal consumption. Jordan is dependent on oil for 99 per cent of all its energy needs.

The third risk that Jordan is subjected to is its transportation with the outside world. Since the war erupted, air transport was curtailed. All Arab and foreign airlines suspended their services to Amman airport. The Royal Jordanian continued to operate around three flights a day to secure a minimum connection to the outside world through Vienna, Larnaca and Cairo. Sea transport was also severely curtailed. The freight and insurance charges became prohibitive. This was not affecting imports only, it was also affecting exports of phosphate, potash, cement and fertilizers, which are the main foreign exchange earners.

The Iraqi acceptance of the Soviet peace plan revived hopes that peace may be restored at an early stage and that the war will be halted. Should that happen, the Jordanian economy will be in a position to bounce back almost immediately. All the production factors are intact although they are now underutilised.

Utopia, revisited

By Safwan Bataineh

SENTIMENTS such as happiness, frustration, or contentment are relative concepts, measured only by contrast. They are functions of varied perspectives and hostages to the passage of time. Seasons turn, fortunes ebb and flow, wounds eventually heal, and souls forever scar.

National psyches are not exempt of such mutations. Japan endured waves of hara kiri, elsewhere known as suicide, after her defeat in World War II, but recovered nicely because of the strong Japanese belief in themselves and their unwavering loyalty to the emperor, the symbol of the Japanese spirit. The Argentine, on the other hand, never quite survived Peron or the Falkland defeat. Brazilians habitually go through national trauma each time they lose the World Cup. And, according to a maverick historian I know, the English were never the same after that idiotic charge by the Light Brigade.

Jordan passed through its own emotional cycles as well. The country suffered a binge of self-satisfied complacency in the late seventies before the cumulative sins of fiscal profligacy and economic mismanagement wiped off that smug smile from our faces in 1988. Then, just as the country was resurfacing into the brightness of well-being, the whole of the Arab World entered a new danger zone of cataclysmic nature.

Jordan's very survival now hinges not on any externalities but upon the inner strengths and moral cohesion of the people. They must close ranks and keep their spirit high, unfettered by the ominous din of war, and undeterred by calamities and pain. The time has come for the nation to turn its collective gaze inward, and begin to count its blessings: a benevolent and sage monarch of noble Hashemite lineage; a fledgling parliamentary democracy that offers more freedom of expression than is allowed American dissenters of Arab ancestry; and a proud people who have always kept the faith and shared their last loaf of bread with their brethren.

Normally, I am not given to maudlin sentiments, nor content with anything less than perfection for my country. Therefore, I have always regarded rosy comparisons with other Third World and Arab countries as pointless arguments expressing defeatist attitudes. I have always felt that Jordanian governments must be strictly evaluated on the basis of a single criteria: the progress achieved towards reaching the ambitious and visionary goals set by the Hashemite leadership. Nevertheless, the cold realities now call for a new perspective. In a world where Jordanians cannot live in dignity anywhere but in Jordan; where we are shunned and bashed as Arabs and, more specifically, as Jordanians we cannot but retreat within our perimeters, mend the fences, and protect the homestead. Surrounded by so much hatred, treachery, and backwardness, a little jingoism may now be appropriate. Not so much a case of Jordan; love it or leave it! But more like the converse: if you cannot leave it, then you better love it.

And there are so many reasons to love this country. Inside a day's ride you can enjoy both the lush, bountiful Dead Sea valley, and the arid, enigmatic Eastern Desert. You can frolic on the hot sands of Aqaba's beaches in the morning, and hike through the breezy woods of Ajloun's mountains by dusk. Yet the beauty of the land is more than matched by the goodness of its people. Talk to your countrymen and you shall feel their courage. Listen to them and you shall suffer their sad yearnings. Get closer and you may share their noble aspirations. And if you reflect deeply, you may just capture that ethereal, eternal essence of all that is Jordan.

There are also so many ways to love this faithful kingdom. You can tend to its land and sow the seeds of future prosperity. Or you can defend it from the lurking enemy. Or still, you can nurture it in your own special way. But love it you must, for Jordan is our haven from treachery, injustice, and persecution. It is an island in a stormy sea of evil. It is, for us, Utopia.

LETTERS

Why we lost the media war

To the Editor:

IT TOOK Israel about five minutes to change its image from an aggressor to a victim in the on-going Gulf war. How did Israel do it? It is very easy, and convenient, for us to say that Zionists control the western media and that the western media are naturally biased against the Arabs. These so-called reasons are nothing but a coverup for our own failure to reach the western media, and through it, the western masses. The time has come for us to stop using Zionist organisations, western bias, and the Jewish lobby in the U.S. as scape goats for our failures.

The reasons for our inability to reach the western masses on our own, or through the western media are not entirely external. We have been losing the media war because we were never ready to fight it and, as it seems, we do not even know how to fight it.

It seems that our media people do not know how to deal with the western media. They do not understand that there are differences between the local audience and the western audience; therefore we should have a different media policy for each audience. On the other hand, we cannot react to the western media as we react towards our own media. By dealing with the western media, and the people in the West, like we deal with our own media and people, we committed a very grave mistake. This mistake is costing us a lot.

There are hundreds of foreign reporters here in Jordan. What have we done to take advantage of this huge media presence? Not only did we not take advantage of this opportunity but we also managed to turn this presence against our goals of showing a true and honest picture of what is going on in this part of the world.

Let me give a small example of our inability to deal with the western media. The night when the foreign minister announced that our tankers and civilian cars were hit by the U.S. allied forces, every reporter in Jordan was trying to get some more information about this aggression against civilian targets. What did we do to provide this information? Nothing. The same night, all the information that was available was what we saw on the local news. And although the local news are good for the local consumption, it is not appropriate for western, and foreign, audience. What would have happened if the same thing happened in Israel. The Israelis, I am sure, would have had an immediate press conference and invited all the press that was available to this conference. Some of the victims would be also present with the impact of their horrible experience still apparent. The Israelis would also provide a government spokesman that knows at least two languages. The whole world, in that case would be watching what the government of Israel wanted to show. In our case, the media had to wait for the next day to get any kind of information.

There was a press conference in the Al Hussein Medical City. This conference was more damaging than helpful. The media was told they would be allowed to see one of the victims. The person that they saw was injured eight days before the tanker's incident and was an Iraqi bedouin. He had a human and touching story to tell but why couldn't we show the world the story of this innocent victim before? By the time the press got to it, it was old news. No western reporter, in his/her right mind, will share a story that is at least a week old with his/her audience. The press was in the hospital to see the victims of the tankers bombing. They were shown none. Many of them left the hospital with the impression that there were no injured, nor dead, civilians. This impression, I am sure, reached these reporters' audience.

The media is as important as the military in these days. We cannot ignore the impact of the media. We have to understand its importance and we have to know how to deal with it in a way that will benefit us and present a true and honest picture to what is going on. The road towards this goal is long and difficult, but we have no choice but to take it because it may mean the difference in the outcome of our struggle.

Mustafa Tell, Amman.

Not a banana republic

To the Editor:

The fierce steadfastness that Iraq has been conducting in the past month against the outrageous bombardment of Iraqi cities seems to be driving the American commander-in-chief crazy. People monitoring American President George Bush's statements and decisions believe that he feels personally humiliated by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi people in their ability to try to wear out the U.S.-allied super forces.

Actually, President Bush felt humiliated from the beginning of the crisis soon after the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait last August, but the humiliation grew as President Saddam continued to resist American and Western pressure to withdraw from Kuwait even after war broke out.

Now, over one month into the extremely heavy bombardment of Iraqi cities, Mr. Saddam said he would give up Kuwait, but still insisted on linking the Palestinian problem and other regional issues equally. The Iraqi president's consistency in these demands seems to be making Mr. Bush very uneasy, calling it a "cruel hoax."

Earlier in the war, the American president explicitly stated that he would accept nothing less than an unconditional surrender from Iraq. One would think that all of Mr. Bush's experts would have known and told him that Mr. Saddam is not a man to surrender, and has absolutely no problem with dying a martyr

who fought for a just cause.

Then he went into charging Mr. Saddam with war crimes after the first batch of American and allied pilots were captured by Iraq. It seems that Mr. Bush had problems trying to differentiate between a leader like Mr. Saddam and one like Manuel Noriega. Not only is the Iraqi president a straight man who does not live off selling cocaine, but his country is far from being a banana republic. Because it is so far-fetched, one can never imagine Mr. Saddam in a striped outfit with a prison number on him in the U.S. Things on this side of the world just don't happen in such a manner.

Out of desperation, Mr. Bush then asked the Iraqi people to overthrow their president — a statement made after his planes bombed and killed hundreds of civilians in the Amiriyah bomb shelter.

Mr. Bush's miscalculations seem to be on the rise. Did he really think that after his planes have been trying to wipe out cities, along with its civilians, that these same civilians would actually listen to the commander-in-chief of an enemy country? On the contrary, such a statement from the leader of the enemy state would only make the Iraqis cling more to their own leader and sovereignty.

Mr. Bush's desperation showed clearly through his far-from-diplomatic, far-from-statesman-like terminology before the outbreak of war. He was quoted several times as saying to his colleagues that he would "kick Saddam's ass" out of Kuwait. It became clear that the conflict became very personal.

Then he refers to Mr. Saddam as a "lying s.o.b." Incredible. The man is losing his marbles! He must have forgotten that he is the president of the greatest nation on earth. We must remember that despite the use of such vulgar language from the U.S. president, Mr. Saddam has always maintained his dignity by never using similar terminology against leaders who have betrayed him and those who insulted him for months.

Perhaps what is bothering Mr. Bush and his likes is that his great superpower has lost its control over the Arab region. Maybe what is bothering him is that not all Arab leaders are his lackies who would agree with him on every single subject under the sun. What is bothering him is that the Iraqi president was able to gather so much support by the Arab and Muslim masses. What is bothering him is that he now knows that he and his country would not be able to dictate what they want any longer, because President Saddam has provided the Arabs with an example that the Western superpowers don't always have to have their way, even if they are attacked with sophisticated high-tech weaponry.

It is time the Americans get down from their pedestal and stop treating the Arab countries as if they were banana republics. The people will not accept what the Americans have to dictate from now on.

When American officials speak of "Keeping His Majesty King Hussein because there is no alternative," they speak as though they can decide who stays and who goes. Well, it does not work like that any more. The Arab people will decide for themselves whom they want as a leader, and the Americans are truly mistaken if they believe that they can control our region in the future.

This is what must be bothering Mr. Bush. The rules of the American superpower game are being changed in this part of the world after President Saddam did what he did since Aug. 2. Mr. Bush must be feeling these new characteristics and that is precisely why he blames President Saddam and why he will reject any peaceful solution that provides some honour for Iraq and the Arabs. But if Mr. Bush wants to fight to the end, he probably realises that his great empire too is coming to an end.

Maha Al Hilu, Amman.

Friends

To the Editor:

I hear reports of the Jordanian-Palestinian relations are deteriorating. I would like you and your readership to know how I feel as a German who has established good relations with your people when I was in Jordan.

Dear Jordanians,

In the years between 1980-1982 I lived among you in Jordan and those years have remained in my memory as the best part of my life. But thinking of you and places I know in Jordan makes me sad. I am saddened not only because of the war in the region and its repercussions on human existence and the environment but also because a small number of German citizens are responsible for the possible vast destruction of the Middle East by selling arms and providing military technology.

As a 20-year-old student of civil engineering I would like to let you know that our younger generation is begging for peace and more individual responsibility towards attaining it. German history was marked by dreadful events during the past 100 years. Nevertheless, the recent peaceful German unity can be an example of attaining objectives in a non-violent manner.

I have always been very grateful for the friendliness of Jordanians. I do not know whether the German government knows of its responsibility, but I hope I will be able to visit Jerusalem as well as Baghdad when they become peaceful cities hopefully soon.

May peace be with us.

Ingo Dewald-Werner, Germany.

I would not have believed it

To the Editor:

When anyone asks me why I am protesting against the war in the Gulf, I reply that I would only undertake deadly, or potentially deadly, force against someone if he or she directly and clearly threatened my life. Consequently, I would not undertake deadly force against anyone in any other circumstances, and I consider the undertaking of force in any non-life threatening circumstances murder. I resent, I abhor, I loathe, I deeply, deeply, detest and hate the killing that George Bush is undertaking in my name as an American. I feel completely powerless to alter the great wrongs that are being done to the Iraqi people. I feel as though many Iraqis must consider me a murderer. I wish I could explain how I feel. Let me try.

The similarities between the behaviour of the Bush administration and the Hitler's Third Reich, more than 50 years ago, are striking. Bush used a conspiracy theory to galvanise national sentiment against the Iraqis, much as Hitler used a similar groundless conspiracy theory against the Jews to unite the German people; Hitler committed genocide against the Jews, and we will see the unfortunate results of Bush's "kinder and gentler" carpet bombing: tens of thousands of Iraqis dead. We see other parallels between the Third Reich and the Bush administration: the displays of nationalistic, flag-waving, almost militant patriotism; the forging of unnatural and convenient (some might say immoral) international alliances; control of the press; and last, the nauseating scapegoating of a people by a country whose people are tired of hearing bad news about their own declining economic strength. The duped American people are only too willing to listen to Bush and the Pentagon talk about American strength, even if it is only the bloody and ephemeral military kind.

There is disturbing, although circumstantial, evidence, moreover, to suggest that the whole conflict between Kuwait and Iraq was encouraged by the CIA. I refer to an article in the Jan. 7, 1991 New Yorker. (See pages 42-45). This article also implies that incipient, potentially successful peace initiatives were thwarted by the Bush administration.

Any actions of retaliation by Saddam Hussein, including the attacks on civilians in Tel Aviv and Riyadh, can be blamed squarely on the Bush administration, therefore, and its brutal racist, anti-Arab policy in the Gulf. Why shouldn't an Arab power have major industry, be allowed "a place at the political table" with the Judeo-Christian powers, and be accorded respect and consideration? If there is no need for Saddam Hussein, or anyone else, to attack us, why should he?

I am not an Arab by birth, but today my heart is with all oppressed Arabs. I would not believe this criminal, insane war to be of America if I had not seen it with my own eyes.

Cassie Moher, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

'Western democracies'

To the Editor:

THE tripod on which the American president based his decision to shoot it out in the Gulf, namely: the Zionist lobby, the interests of oil companies and the interests of the arms manufacturers, coupled with self images of false grandeur, just like his predecessor, for when he made his decision, he must have foreseen the situation as Armageddon being made and that IIE is at the helm, not to mention a host of domestic problems, personal and otherwise, that by themselves would lure him to grab the opportunity to divert the attention elsewhere; all these reasons make it very clear to us that this is a CRUSADE against the Arabs and Muslims with the aim of keeping us on our knees and the continuation of exploiting our riches and resources. It has nothing to do with reinstating democracy in Kuwait, because what had not been there in the first place could never be reinstated.

Armageddon it may be, but a fight between good and evil it is. And good is never motivated by purely selfish, unscrupulous and evil designs that call for the control of others and deciding their destiny, nor it is "Arabs and Muslims must bear the responsibility for the recession in your economy, your high inflation rates and taking the blame for high unemployment figures." And surely good is not to make us pay for the atrocities committed by the Nazis, communists and other European democracies against the Jews; who with the help and protection of the same old tyrants are committing worse actions against the Arabs and Muslims all over the Middle East.

Your politicians and media project the Iraqi president as a dictator, motivated by selfish reasons. I am not going to defend him, I do not think he needs to be defended. I will just ask you to compare him to a president who bribed and coerced twenty seven countries, twenty six if you exclude Britain, which is obviously after getting revenge from both the Americans and the Arabs for its failures in Iran and Egypt during the fifties, into fighting his own battle with him, when surely he did not need them, but how else could he have cladded his evil designs with legitimacy. A president who refused to acknowledge the responsibility of his country towards the turmoil in the Middle East and thus accept to allow for the convening of an international conference to solve the problems in this part of the world once and for all, under the pretext of "not rewarding an aggressor" as he put it, but he rather accepted to sacrifice the blood of his fellow compatriots for his false pride, or was it to make the Middle East safe for the Zionist state. A

president who accused the president of Iraq of systematic destruction of Kuwait, but when he realised that his aggression is not getting him to where he wants he took it upon himself to systematically destroy Iraq, its infrastructure and its civilisation. A president who realised that his military might has failed to destroy the military means of Iraq, so he turns to bombing the Iraqi civilians and massacring them in the hope that it will turn them against their leadership. A president who praises courage but the only courageous act he is known to have taken is standing in front of TV cameras and lying with a straight face about his real motives behind sending his soldiers to the Middle East and lying about the bombing of civilians and civilian targets in the aftermath. A president who succeeded in making tyrants like Hitler and Nero turn in their graves with jealousy. Now who benefits the title "dictator"? That is for you to contemplate over.

Armageddon it is! But we prefer to call it "the mother of all battles." When it is over the White House shall be clad in black, for it has harboured evil quite a long time. George "the butcher" Bush will realise that he miscalculated, he will find out the hard way that what he is doing to Iraq and the Iraqi people will not turn them against their leadership, that to the contrary it gave them the proof of his diabolical designs. He will find out that the history he was made to read about the Arabs and their heritage is false, because had he read their true history first, he then would have realised that throughout the history of mankind many tyrants had committed the mistake of trying to destroy the civilisation in this part of the world, and not only did they fail but they paid heavily for their blunders, just as is bound to happen to him this time as well. The Western allies shall discover how grave a mistake they have committed, that in addition to the huge losses they are destined to sustain, they will end up with a "camel's complex." For your benefit a camel's complex stems out of the fact that camel caravans travelling in the deserts form a single line of camels, each of which has its reins tied to the tail of the camel ahead, but the foremost camel has its reins tied to the tail of a donkey. It seems the camels do not mind the hardships of the desert, it is being led by a donkey that gives them a complex.

War is not a joke neither is dying in a war, but it sure beats the hell out of living as the underdog.

Aziz Abu Rumman, P.O. Box 140, Sweileh, Jordan

Suffer the little children

To the Editor:

While our eyes are fixed in shock and horror towards the East on the horrible destruction being wrought on our friends and neighbours the Iraqis; and with a feeling of sickness and despair towards the West because of the terrible hatred that is directed towards all of us as Arabs, a problem which has slowly been creeping up on us for the last two years has been gaining momentum.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently published the results of a survey it did, to identify the economic effects of the Gulf crisis on the Jordanian family and stated that one third of our country's population is living below the poverty line.

What is the definition of poverty line, you may ask. Well, it has been defined as a family of six to seven people, living on JD 89 per month. When you think of fixed expenses like rent, water, electricity and transportation needed to get to and from work (if work is available) that really doesn't leave much for luxuries like food and medicine! Which brings me to the problem "undernutrition."

There are families in Jordan where the children only have breakfast every other day because there is not enough to go around. A family of 11 people will sit down to a meal of tea, bread, one or two onions and one or two tomatoes. Children are fainting in school because they haven't had breakfast or supper the night before. I wish these stories were something out of a novel about Africa but they are not, nor are they problems confined to a small, well defined, easily reachable group of people: 18 per cent of our population is below five years of age. Assuming poverty is distributed among children as it is in the population as a whole that means there are 198,000 children below five years who need our help so that malnutrition won't take hold, and so their brains can grow and develop properly. Brain development and growth is most rapid during the first two years of life, a time when proper nutrition is essential. If children miss out on the chance their brains won't get another chance to make up for lost time. There are also 374,000 children between five and 15 years of age, 41,666 pregnant women and about 20,833 lactating women all of whom have heightened nutritional needs which are probably not being met because of economic hardship.

The problem is there and won't go away because we choose not to think about it. We have a wonderful, valuable and highly resourceful institution in Jordan called the Jordanian mother who has so far with every means available to her tried to avert the disaster she can see happening before her eyes. Isn't there something that can be done to help her insure her health, and the health and proper growth and development of our most valuable resource: our children?

Linda Abu Jaber, M.D., Amman.

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

European Parliament releases \$1b food aid to Soviets

STRASBOURG, France (AP)—The European Parliament Friday released more than \$1 billion in food aid to Soviet Union.

The European Community's 518-seat assembly had suspended the aid package — worth 750 million European Currency Units — last month because of a dispute about the Soviet crackdown in the Baltic republics and problems finding money in the EC budget.

In a measure passed in a hand vote, the parliament urged the EC executive commission to ensure the food aid winds up in the hands of the people who need it most.

It added the aid was not for the Moscow government but "the inhabitants of the USSR."

EC officials have worried the central Soviet government might keep the aid away from parts of the population trying to secede from the country.

The parliament also approved \$111 million in EC aid for Czechoslovakia and \$137 million for Romania and Bulgaria.

During a debate Tuesday, parliament members repeated their condemnation of the Soviet crackdown in the Baltics but said it was wrong to use food aid as a political tool.

Leaders of the 12 EC nations approved the Soviet food programme in December, but the aid was suspended after Soviet troops killed 18 pro-secession demonstrators in separate clashes in Riga, Latvia, and Vilnius, Lithuania.

The European Community had also pledged \$1.1 billion over three years for African development projects implemented by the World Bank.

The grant — worth 1 billion European Currency Units — will be used to promote economic reform and improve health and education in 21 impoverished sub-Saharan African countries, said EC Development Commissioner Manuel Marin.

The EC is the largest contributor to the World Bank's \$15 billion special programme of assistance for Africa. The 12-nation trade bloc gave \$300 million to the programme's first phase in 1988-1990.

Soviet prime minister to crack down on crooked rouble dealers

MOSCOW (R)—Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov vowed Friday to crack down on crooked currency dealers, whom he accuses of plotting to wreck the Soviet economy and overthrow President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"Recently we have seen the emergence of certain groups resembling the Colombian mafia, especially in the black market exchange of the rouble against the dollar," he told a news conference.

The recently appointed premier astounded Western bankers and businessmen earlier this month with allegations that they are involved in a conspiracy to flood the country with billions of roubles which had been smuggled abroad.

"We are quite alarmed about this... we will put a stop to such things and I believe our foreign business partners should help us in this affair instead of criticising us," Pavlov said, without disclosing what measures would be taken.

Swiss, Austrian, Canadian and other banks implicated by the prime minister said they knew of no such plot and doubted if there were enough roubles held abroad to influence the Soviet economy.

The rouble is a non-convertible currency and exports are illegal, but Pavlov said moves were afoot to exchange vast sums for dollars on the black market. The roubles would then be fed back into the Soviet economy, sparking hyperinflation.

He said he had documents proving the existence of plans to exchange hundreds of billions of roubles.

"When these exchanges involved (private) cash exchanges only, they could be controlled in one way or another. But when banks became involved, it considerably increased the danger," he said.

Pavlov produced documents on two separate deals said to involve Geneva and London-based banks. He added that he had on grounds for making claims against the banks and the documents could be the work of "swindlers."

"The point is that a Soviet bank is conducting official correspondence regarding sales of a certain amount of roubles to a foreign bank," he said in reference to an alleged proposal by the private Mensenw commercial bank.

Pavlov said he was pleased that Western banks had denied participating in such transactions. "I regret very much that my interview was interpreted as an attack on Western businesses. I did not intend to make any attacks on Western businessmen... we stand for cooperation with Western business."

Pavlov, a conservative reformer who was previously finance minister, suggested that the government would act soon to renege Soviet hard currency reserves held abroad.

"When exporters sell goods abroad and leave their money abroad this does not help us," he said. "We believe our exporters should bring back their hard currency income and place it in Soviet banks."

Pavlov also said there would be changes in the structure of the

Soviet economy under planned reforms, reducing the role of the central planning organisation Gosplan and ministries responsible for industrial production.

"We are trying to create a system whereby enterprises can be sure that no one will interfere in their business activities," he added.

Earlier, Pavlov warned that opposition by some Soviet republics to the formation of Mikhail Gorbachev's new cabinet could plunge the economy into deeper crisis.

Pavlov announced that a new government structure would be created to determine economic policy and map out the transition of a market economy.

Three Soviet republics, Ukraine, Byelorussia and the Russian Federation, say there is no need to form the new cabinet before a new treaty is drawn up determining the degree of autonomy offered to the republics.

"This is an unprofessional approach. It is an artificial delay, which will only deepen the crisis in the economy," Pavlov told parliament.

The cabinet, directly subordinate to Gorbachev, will have 55 members, compared with 68 previously, he added. Pavlov will head the new economic body, the State Council on Economic Reform.

The tone of Pavlov's remarks suggested he would press ahead in a bid to secure parliamentary support for forming the cabinet. The post finance minister, formerly occupied by Pavlov, has been vacant since last month. Confrontation between the

central government and the republics increased recently over the issue of price reform, a key plank of moves to make Soviet industry more efficient.

Russia opposes the prime minister's plan to raise prices by an average of 60 per cent because the Kremlin wants to control distribution of increased revenue resulting from the measure.

Russian leader Boris Yeltsin accused Gorbachev of deceiving the people with his economic reforms and demanded his immediate resignation.

The head of the Soviet State Pricing Committee, Vyacheslav Senchagov, said he was optimistic that price reform would go ahead despite Russian objections.

"My forecast is positive. Price reform cannot be used as a trump card in a political game and the attempts of some people to make it a trump card will end in failure," Senchagov told a news conference.

"They are safeguarding their positions politically, but economically they understand that without the price reform, for example, light industry cannot develop," he said. "It is suffocating. Economic absurdity is coming."

Senchagov said increased revenue from the first price rises would total 312 billion roubles (\$557 billion at the official rate). Compensation through increased wages, pensions and other allowances would cost 265 billion roubles (\$473 billion).

The compensation will be distributed among the 15 Soviet republics, he said.

Turks want 'sweet deals after the war'

ANKARA (R)—Turkey hopes its anti-Iraq stand in the Gulf crisis will help Turkish contractors win a share in rebuilding Kuwait without hurting their prospects in Iraq.

Iraq owed Turkish contractors nearly \$300 million when United Nations trade sanctions forced them to suspend work on projects ranging from dams and roads to mass housing.

Now they are looking for new business in Iraq as well as Kuwait, where some expect to work alongside U.S. and British companies well-placed to pick up lucrative contracts in a reconstruction drive expected to cost \$50 billion.

"Without a partnership with U.S. or British firms it will be difficult to get sweet deals after the war," Bulent Erdogan, foreign relations manager of Nurot construction firm, said.

In the past 10 to 15 years, foreign firms have taken the cream and left us with low-profit, long-term jobs in mass housing and infrastructure," he told Reuters.

"Now we want to take part in petrochemical and other high-profit industrial projects, which is why we want partnerships with American and British companies," Erdogan said.

Officials say the government will focus its efforts on a Middle East development bank proposed by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker to finance reconstruction after the war.

"We strongly support the establishment of this bank," Mahfi Egitmez, deputy undersecretary at the treasury, told Reuters. "Our government will take an active role in its activities, including projects for our contractors in Iraq and Kuwait."

Not much flesh has appeared on the bone of Baker's idea, but Turkish bankers and officials said it could be designed to channel funds from Saudi Arabia and other wealthy Gulf states into a rebuilding effort strongly influenced by Washington.

Egitmez said the United States might push for Cairo to be the headquarters of the bank. Turkey itself, seeking to be a full member of the European Community, was not a candidate.

"We would be seen as a Middle Eastern country, which we don't like. We want to be seen as a European country," he said.

"Turkey has a position of advantage in post-war projects as it already has a reputation in the Gulf countries," he pointed out.

Kadir Seven, head of the Turkish Contractors Association, said Turkish contractors would do best to combine with Western firms and could work through the planned development bank.

Tapped Kuwaiti government officials planning reconstruction from a temporary headquarters in Washington are looking favourably on Turkey, Kuwait's ambassador to Ankara said.

"They consider Turkey as one of the friendly countries that stood with Kuwait and could share in reconstruction," the envoy Faisal Al-Rifa'i, told Reuters this week.

Turkey enforced U.N. sanctions after Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait, cutting twin Iraqi oil export pipelines and halting trade with Iraq, then its second biggest trading partner and supplier of 60 per cent of its crude oil needs.

Ankara tied down eight Iraqi divisions by reinforcing its troops on the southern border and allowed the U.S. air force to use the southern Incirlik base from the second day of the war.

Gunes Tamer, state minister for the economy, estimated this week that Turkey had suffered Gulf-related losses of \$4.7 billion in 1990 and could lose another \$4 billion this year.

IMF board approves \$1.6b loan to Hungary

BUDAPEST (R)—The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a three-year, \$1.6 billion loan to help Hungary in its transition to a market economy, a central bank official has said.

Akos Csere, senior deputy general manager at the National Bank of Hungary, said the IMF board approved the stand-by arrangement at its meeting in Washington.

Around \$660 million will be available this year if Hungary, meets agreed financial targets.

Hungarian officials had considered approval of the loan a formality but were still relieved.

Weighted down by Eastern Europe's highest per capita foreign debt, Hungary needed a new deal with the IMF not only to keep it in funds during what could be a serious credit crunch but also to convince other lenders to keep lending, bankers said.

The stand-by arrangement does not include around \$500 million which the IMF promised Hungary in January to help finance oil imports.

To qualify for the loan package, Hungary agreed to hold its budget deficit this year at 78 billion forint (\$1.13 billion) and to limit its current account balance of payments deficit to \$1.2 billion.

A concerted export drive, booming tourism and a crackdown on imports helped the current account into a surplus of about \$100 million last year. It was a dramatic improvement from a \$1.44 billion deficit in 1989.

Algeria draws large foreign investments

ALGIERS (R)—Algeria, determined to pursue an ambitious foreign investment programme despite the Gulf war, has approved eight new joint ventures with foreign firms including a \$3.5 billion petrochemical complex.

A central bank statement said Zurich-based ASEA Brown Boveri had teamed up with a private Algerian partner to build a petrochemical complex producing 1.6 million tonnes of methanol and 100,000 tonnes of ammonia and urea annually.

The project is the largest yet approved by the bank's council on money and credit under a 1990 law that gave foreign investors unprecedented incentives.

Foreign investment and other steps toward a free market are key to Algeria's plans for economic recovery after two decades of socialist central planning. Officials insist reforms will not be slowed by the Gulf war.

The central bank, whose statement was carried by the Algerian news agency APS, said it had also approved a flat glass factory held jointly by Algerian state firms and banks and multinational

al corporations from the United States, the Netherlands and Germany.

The \$250 million venture, dubbed Technover Algerie, will be designed to produce 140,000 tonnes a year.

Italy's Fentadem got the go-ahead for a pharmaceutical plant in the Algerian partner.

The state electronics firm Enapem plans to assemble microcomputers with Samsung of South Korea, home appliances with Moulineux of France and televisions, washing machines and refrigerators with Ram Dis Ticaret of Turkey.

Under the new laws, foreign firms that invest in production plants can also sell directly to the Algerian market.

The central bank had previously approved 20 applications for direct investment and sales networks by foreign and Algerian firms. About 700 other requests are pending.

Last Wednesday a commerce ministry decree allowed the creation of import-export firms that can compete with former state trading monopolies.

Britain names price tag for state electricity generation companies

LONDON (R)—Britain Friday put the finishing touches to one of its most troubled privatisations, naming a price tag of £2.16 billion (\$4.23 billion) for the sale of shares in two state electricity generation companies.

Energy Secretary John Wakeham told a news conference the two groups, National Power PLC and Powergen PLC, would be offered for sale to the public at £1.75 (\$3.43) per share.

At that price the companies were offering a dividend yield of about 6.3 per cent, compared with an average 8.4 per cent for the 12 regional electricity distribution companies in England and Wales which were sold last December.

This gives National Power market capitalisation of £2.23 billion (\$4.37 billion) and Powergen £1.37 billion (\$2.68 billion).

Wakeham said: "Today marks the culmination of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales. Last year we successfully privatised the 12 regional electricity companies in what was undoubtedly one of the most successful privatisations this government has undertaken."

Chiefs said the regional distribution companies were sold too cheaply and the shares were greatly over-subscribed.

This time the terms for the power companies look stiffer and the analysts believe the government is aiming more at large institutional investors rather than

the general public.

Privatisation of the industry — one of a series of sales of state enterprises by the Conservative government since 1979 — had a troubled beginning.

The nuclear industry had to be dropped from the equation at an early stage when the costs of scrapping old plant were realised and last year there was an abortive attempt to sell Powergen to British industrial conglomerate Hanson PLC.

A total of 1.23 billion shares are being offered for sale in both National Power and Powergen which represents about 60 per cent of the share capital of both of the companies.

Wakeham said: "The total value of the 100 per cent of the capital of National Power and Powergen at the offer price is some £3.6 billion (\$7 billion) in aggregate."

If the debt the state owns in the two firms — £768 million (\$1.5 billion) — is included, the value to the state from privatisation would amount to aggregate to more than £4.3 billion (\$8.42 billion) at the offer price.

Payment for the shares will be in two instalments, the first of £1 (\$1.95) on application by March 4. The minimum application is 300 shares.

The government intends to sell the balance of the shares but has said it would not do so before April 1, 1993.

German coalition said still trying to work out big tax increase

BONN (R)—Chancellor Helmut Kohl's coalition parties want to raise taxes by at least 22 billion marks (almost \$15 billion), but have so far failed to agree on a detailed package, coalition sources said Friday.

Christian Democrat, Christian Social Union and Free Democrat leaders, including Kohl, agreed in principle Thursday to raise taxes on insurance and oil products, including petrol.

The agreement came during talks aimed at deciding how to pay for German unification, the country's contribution to the

allied Gulf war effort and aid to Eastern Europe.

Sources said the coalition parties were considering raising taxes on petrol by 25 pfennings (17 cents) a litre.

A 25 pfennig rise in petrol taxes would bring additional income of about 15 billion marks (\$10 billion), the sources said. The parties also planned to increase taxes on heating oil and diesel, but details were not available.

Government sources have said Waigel was considering propos-

ing raising the petrol tax by at least 20 pfennings.

Details of the rise in insurance taxes were not available. Insurance taxes brought federal revenue of about 4.5 billion marks (\$3 billion) last year.

Coalition sources said a Christian Democrat proposal to tack a five-per cent surcharge on income tax for one year met opposition from the Free Democrats.

The Free Democrats say higher income taxes would squelch already sluggish investment in former East Germany.

The sources said the coalition was also looking for new ways to reduce federal subsidies.

Economics Minister Juergen Moellmann has told German television the coalition parties were in agreement that there should be no increase in the government's borrowing.

The 1991 budget calls for federal tax revenues of 293.85 billion marks (\$197 billion) and a deficit of almost 70 billion marks (\$47 billion).

The coalition talks were expected to continue Monday.

Japan completes 51 months of growth

TOKYO (R)—Japan completed 51 months of economic expansion in February and is still going strong, an Economic Planning Agency (EPA) official said Friday.

This is the second longest period of growth after the 57 months of expansion from November 1965 to July 1970.

The official, briefing reporters on the agency's monthly report to economic ministers, said domestic demand showed a continuous firm trend, with good personal

consumption and capital expenditure.

The business outlook was generally positive, the EPA report said, adding that industrial production and corporate earnings are rising.

Housing starts have edged down but are still high.

Wholesale prices have showed only moderate movement recently. Consumer prices of fresh food rose but underlying price stability was not endangered, it said.

Iran, Greece agree to study gas pipeline

NICOSIA (R)—Iran and Greece have agreed to cooperate in oil and other industries and study the idea of an Iranian gas pipeline passing through Greece.

The Iranian oil agency IRNA said a letter of understanding was signed in Tehran by Iran's Mideco and Metals Minister Mohammad Hossein Mahlonchi and the Greek minister of industry, energy and technology, Stavros Dimas.

The agreement said a decision on the pipeline would be made during a future visit to Athens by

an Iranian deputy oil minister, IRNA said.

Iran, which has the world's biggest natural gas reserves after the Soviet Union, has been studying gas pipeline projects via Turkey in Europe for several years.

Finance Minister Mubsen Nourbakhsh said this month that Iran was involved in two sets of negotiations on the plan — one with France and one with the five-country group of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Romania and Yugoslavia.

The agreement said a decision on the pipeline would be made during a future visit to Athens by

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U.S. appears to rule out airline bailout, ticket tax break

WASHINGTON (R)—U.S. Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner appeared to rule out a bailout for the beleaguered American airline industry, despite pressure from Congress and the industry.

Skinner told reporters after testifying at a Senate Commerce Committee hearing that the administration of President George Bush opposed a plan floated by some carriers to let them retain for their own use, perhaps for a year, a federal 10 per cent ticket tax.

"That is not being looked at," Skinner said.

U.S. airline companies are beset by huge debts, fallout from the Gulf war and the U.S. economic recession. Several carriers are in or near bankruptcy.

But Skinner said he was confident that "consolidation is no grounds for panic" and that the industry would remain competitive despite the failure of some

Skinner suggested in his testimony that it might be a good time for Congress to consider changing legislation that bars a foreign airline from owning more than 25 per cent of a U.S. airline company's voting stock.

Last month, Skinner moved to allow foreign airlines to own up to 49 per cent of non-voting stock.

In his testimony, he skirted what position the administration might take on legislation to open up airline investment from overseas. He has pressed for what he called a globalisation of the airline marketplace.

But the committee was told a relaxation of ownership rules would do little to help deal with the current crisis.

"Quite frankly, even unrestricted foreign investment in U.S. carriers would do little to solve the industry's capital problem," Northwest Airlines co-chairman Alfred Checchi told the committee.

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Thai Armed Forces overthrow premier, impose martial law

BANGKOK (R) — The Thai Armed Forces seized power from civilian Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan Saturday, accusing him of tolerating a corruption-riddled government, and imposed martial law.

Chatichai was arrested by air force officers at Bangkok's airport as he was due to board an aircraft for the northern city of Chiang Mai, an air force official said.

Heavily-armed soldiers backed by armoured cars took over government house, the state-run Radio Thailand building and government television stations Saturday morning.

Announcing martial law, and army spokesman said the edict would be enforced nationwide. Supreme Commander General Sunthorn Kongsompong would assume the responsibilities of caretaker prime minister, a military spokesman said.

There was apparently no resistance from Chatichai loyalists to the armed forces' move which was the 16th coup or attempted putsch since absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932.

"The National Peacekeeping Command made up of the commanders of the army, navy and

air force and the national police chief has taken over power of national administration as of 11.30 of Feb. 23, 1991. The command has full control of the situation," Sunthorn said in a statement read over army-run Channel Five television.

He was flanked by army Commander-in-Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon and the heads of the navy, air force and police.

A military spokesman, in a later broadcast, listed a litany of complaints against Chatichai.

"Members of this government have taken advantage of their position to build personal fortunes for themselves and their associates in a manner that is unprecedented," he said.

Chatichai had turned a blind eye to abuses, he charged. He cited cases of politicians haggling to win contracts for big public projects.

Political appointees had forced out professional civil servants, turning Thailand into a "parliamentary dictatorship," he said.

This was apparently a reference to Chatichai's son and advisor, Kraisak Choonhavan, and his backers who have pursued foreign policy initiatives that run

counter to military thinking, especially on the war in neighbouring Cambodia.

The armed forces also believed the government was trying to distort the investigation into a 1982 plot to assassinate the then prime minister, a member of the royal family and other national figures.

Leaflets have circulated in Bangkok accusing Kraisak and a controversial military aide to Chatichai, Major General Manoon Roopchakron, of masterminding the plot.

Chatichai, a 68-year-old former cavalry general, became Thailand's first democratically-elected leader for more than a decade in 1988 and has led the country through an economic boom that has thrust it to the forefront of developing Asian countries.

But his relationship with the military has been rocky. In response to the generals' allegations of greedy and incompetent politicians, civilians have said the armed forces were trying to hang on to their role as power brokers out of self-interest.

Chatichai resigned briefly in December and dropped controversial members of his cabinet in a bid to clear the air.

But the dispute flared again when the investigation into the assassination plot was revived.

Chatichai viewed this as an attempt to embarrass his government. But his manoeuvre Wednesday of appointing ex-army chief General Arthit Kamlang-Ek — a rival of the present military hierarchy — was apparently the last straw for the generals.

Soldiers in blue scarves took over Radio Thailand, Channel Nine and other government television stations, setting up machinegun posts at the gates.

Channel Nine went off the air mid-way through a Kung Fu film.

A column of 10 tanks rolled from the northern outskirts towards the city centre, Reuters reporter Sutin Wannaborn said from the scene.

Many analysts and diplomats had believed the army had accepted that coups were outdated.

Thailand's boom depends heavily on foreign investment and the millions of foreign tourists who flock to its bars and beaches. The tourist industry is already suffering because of the Gulf war.

"I really didn't think a coup would happen again," said one Western diplomat.

Yugoslav leaders take steps to defuse crisis

SARAJEVO, Yugoslavia (AP) — Leaders of Yugoslavia's six republics closer to ending a feud between Communist-ruled Serbia and two republics threatening to declare full independence by summer.

At a fifth round of talks on Yugoslavia's future Friday, the leaders agreed to keep the impoverished federal government going while they search for a solution to a worsening, decade-long crisis.

They also agreed to appoint experts who would examine the options for secession before a sixth round of regional leaders' talks in Belgrade on March 1.

The collective federal presidency should then "propose the constitutional-legal procedure for separation from Yugoslavia" in a way acceptable to all its diverse, feuding regions, a statement on the Yugoslav news agency, Tanjug, said.

Regional and federal officials thus acknowledged for the first time the westernmost republics of Slovenia and Croatia could secede.

Lawmakers in both non-Communist republics took concrete steps toward independence this week, voting to give state laws precedence over federal legislation.

Both passed resolutions formalising the process of secession, which they threaten to complete by July.

Croatia's president Franjo Tudjman said the parties were able to clarify their differences during Friday's talks.

"At least all the cards are on the table," he told reporters upon return to Croatia's capital, Zagreb.

4 die in Tirana riots

VIENNA (AP) — Shots rang out Saturday at a military academy in the Albanian capital of Tirana, where four people died just hours earlier in a clash of reformers and Communist conservatives, residents said.

The fatal shooting late Friday climaxed three days of unrest in Tirana, where anti-Communist demonstrators tore down a giant statue of Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha and set fire to his portraits and books earlier this week.

Tirana Radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) in London, suggested the anti-Hoxha demonstrations had triggered a fierce reaction from pro-Hoxha forces and some army officers.

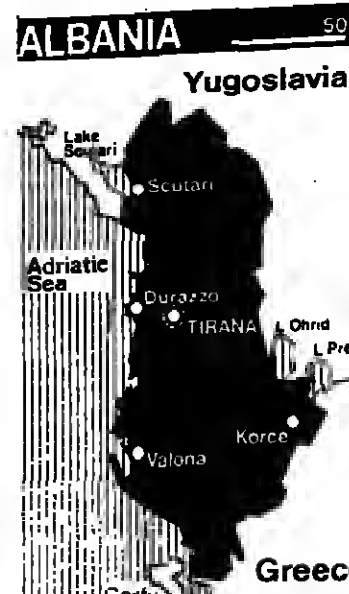
An official journalist, who spoke on the telephone from Tirana, said he heard sporadic shooting at 9 a.m. (0800 GMT) from the academy, but there were no reports of new casualties. In Tirana, stores were open and work was normal, as tanks, police and troops guarded strategic points.

The journalist, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said 50 people had been arrested in Friday's unrest, and the Interior Ministry was expected to issue a statement after interrogating them.

The explosion of anger on all sides indicated that violence lurks just beneath the surface as Albania grapples with the cruel legacy of Hoxha, who ruled for 41 years.

The television Friday showed scenes of thousands of pro-Hoxha demonstrators in three towns in southern Albania, the region where the late dictator was born.

The radio also broadcast an appeal from Tirana army officers who appealed for calm and asked for a national referendum "to assess the figure of Enver Hoxha."



87-year-old millionaire wants wife to have heirs

JOHANNESBURG (R) — An 87-year-old millionaire says he is advertising for a wife to give him heirs to take over his cattle empire in South Africa.

The Johannesburg Star reported that Henning Van Aswegen wanted to find a woman — "she doesn't have to be a ravishing beauty" — to produce two or three children.

He told the newspaper every son his new wife brought into the world would be pledged one million rand (\$400,000) worth of farmland, while daughters would receive half a million rand (\$200,000) in property.

Van Aswegen said he lost his first wife 12 years ago and his son by that marriage died. Although he has grandchildren, they have not produced heirs. "My grandson Jonathan farms with me and lives here on the farm. The problem is he was married long ago, and there are still no children. What will happen if he never has a son — or any children at all? Who will inherit everything then?"

Van Aswegen said. The millionaire, who has a string of cattle farms along the border between the Orange Free State and Transvaal province, told the Star he had advertised in a farming magazine for a housekeeper so he could check any woman thoroughly before marrying. He had an avalanche of replies from would-be brides but most were divorcees, which goes against his religious beliefs.

Sweden may force dads to stay home

STOCKHOLM (AP) — If more fathers don't start taking time off work to be with their kids — and soon — the government may have to consider force, according to a bill presented to parliament.

Sweden's leave policy gives parents of newborns 12 months paid time off work at 90 per cent of their salary, with an additional three months off at minimal pay. Up to now, parents have had the option of how to divide the time between them. But most don't divide it equally. The social Democratic government says it's not happy that only 46 per cent of fathers use parental leave, compared with 97 per cent of mothers. In the interest of sexual equality, the government bill says it wants to see up to two-thirds of fathers use the parental leave.

The Swedish News Agency, TT, said that under the terms of the bill, the government would rely on campaigns over the next two years to persuade fathers to stay home. After 1993, force can be applied, said the TT report. It said a system of quotas was among measures being discussed.

Yoko unveils Lennon T-shirts

NEW YORK (AP) — Four unreleased John Lennon drawings are now on T-shirts which will be sold to benefit the philanthropy established by the slain singer-songwriter, Yoko Ono has announced.

The shirts will be sold exclusively at Hard Rock Cafes around the world. The price of the new apparel was not immediately set. Ono said the funds will go to the Spirit Foundation, which she established with her late husband. The foundation donates money to a variety of causes. Profits from the recently released remake of "Give Peace a Chance" also went to the foundation. Lennon was fatally shot in front of his New York City apartment in 1980.

Dutch police find 6-month-old corpse in apartment

AMSTRADAM, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch police have found the six-month-old mummified corpse of a solitary man whom nobody missed because all of his bills were being paid on time, police said.

The body of the 51-year-old man was discovered "amid a pile of garbage in his first-floor apartment in a high-rise Amsterdam district, according to police spokesman Cees Rameau. Evidence found in the apartment indicated the man must have died at least half a year ago, Rameau said. Because the man's bank automatically paid his rent and utility bills, his absence wasn't noticed by anyone except his neighbours, who assumed he had been hospitalised, Rameau said.

The affair finally came to light when a janitor mentioned to police that he frequently removed large amounts of mail; the police spokesman said. There was no indication the man had become a victim of a crime, he said.

Soviet army 'has no plans for coup'

MOSCOW (AP) — A top general used the formal Army Day address at a Kremlin gala to say the military has no plans to overthrow the government.

"The representatives of the armed forces do not strive for power," said Gen. Konstantin Kochetov, first deputy minister of defence. "They are not preparing a military coup."

A select audience of about 1,500, including President Mikhail Gorbachev, heard the speech at the Palace of Congresses.

Kochetov did not mention Gorbachev by name in his speech, which repeatedly pledged

allegiance to the constitution and socialism. But he denounced a statement made Tuesday by Russian Republic President Boris Yeltsin calling for Gorbachev's resignation.

"The army and the navy reject the ambitious statement of Boris Yeltsin, his line of opposition and deepening of the split in our society," Kochetov said.

Yeltsin suggested that Gorbachev's resignation would be a "betrayal of the Russian Federation Council, which includes the presidents of all 15 Soviet republics, including Yeltsin himself."

Gorbachev has often been at

odds with the republic leaders, who are demanding more authority and, in some cases, outright independence. He did not speak during the Army Day ceremony nor did he mingle with the crowd.

Some observers have accused Gorbachev of succumbing to a creeping coup, agreeing to the demands of old-style Communists and the military in order to retain power.

But extreme hardliners want Gorbachev's job. A group calling itself the National Salvation Committee is lobbying legislators to dump Gorbachev and hand over power to them.

Cholera hits hard where Peru's epidemic broke out

CHANCAY, Peru (R) — They start coming a few hours after lunch, vomiting had gripping their stomachs in pain as doctors frantically jab serum needles into their arms.

Every day, 20 to 60 new victims of Peru's cholera epidemic stream into the hospital at Chancay, a seaside town where the bacterial disease appeared in Latin America last month for the first time in nearly a century.

The epidemic has since raged up and down Peru's Pacific coast, overwhelming the nation's health system and threatening the rest of Latin America.

"At about four o'clock, they start arriving in big numbers. It's the food they eat at lunch, it must be contaminated," said Gladys Pemberton, a doctor at the sole hospital in this town of 50,000 people.

Cholera victims, pale-faced and some so dehydrated their ribs cages stick through their skin, occupy all of the hospital's 33 beds. More are waiting for treatment in the hall.

The epidemic has struck 26,340 people so far — about one in every 850 Peruvians — and killed 134 of them in only a month, the Health Ministry reported Friday.

Though easily treated, the disease, spread by contaminated water or food, has killed some of its victims in only a few hours through a combination of acute dehydration and kidney failure.

The epidemic has turned Chancay, a sleepy fishing port 80 kilometres north of Lima, into the front line of an international effort to study and combat the disease which, in its present form, broke out in Indonesia in 1961.

"It's taken 30 years for this pandemic to spread across Asia and Africa and finally reach Latin America. Now that it's implanted here, it's here to stay," said epidemiologist Jean-Paul Boutin.

3 killed in Spain after faulty radiation treatment

MADRID (AP) — A Spanish health official has said he feared the worst for 24 cancer patients who received high doses of radiation when a Zaragoza hospital's linear accelerator went haywire for 10 days. Three other patients have already died.

A judge in the northeastern city of Zaragoza is investigating what the director of the Insalud chain of state-run hospitals called "the worst accident in the world" of its type.

"We fear the worst for some of the patients" Insalud spokesman Fernando Gomez said. "We are seeking information worldwide to find someone who has experience dealing with this kind of situation."

It was unclear whether human error was involved in the accident. The General Electric Linear Accelerator incorporates

several backup safety measures. Phyllis Pizzo, spokeswoman for GE Medical Systems in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, said the company is working with authorities in Spain to determine the cause of the accident.

Officials from GE's European headquarters, based in Paris, are working on the investigation, she said.

Hospital officials said the accelerator was now functioning normally.

The Zaragoza corner listed cause of deaths as respiratory arrest due to inflammation of the spinal cord caused by excessive radiation.

Neither health nor hospital officials know how much radiation the victims were exposed to or how much they should have been receiving.

Communism is dead — Former E. German ideologist

BERLIN (R) — The chief ideologist of former East Germany said in an interview published Saturday that communism was dead and he was ashamed he had helped keep it alive so long.

Otto Reinhold told the Berlin newspaper Der Morgen he realised as early as the second half of the 1980s that the restrictive, centrally-planned East German system could not survive.

"The system, and this is now my firm conviction, could not be reformed," he said in his first interview since the 1989 democratic uprising that ousted the Communist old guard and paved the way for German unification just a year later.

"Socialism is finished for good," he said. "It will never crop up again in industrialised countries."

Reinhold, 65, was East Germany's chief ideologist for more than two decades and also headed the Communist Party's Social Sciences Academy.

In August 1989, as East Germany began to unravel with a mass exodus of people, Reinhold gave the clearest indication that the country would not, or could not, radically change course and remain in being.

"What right to exist would a capitalist East Germany have next to a capitalist West Germany?" he asked in a radio interview. "None, of course."

Proved right on that score, Reinhold has had more than a year to mull over his role in the now-defunct state.

"I'm really ashamed of some of the things I put down on paper," said Reinhold, whose staunchly orthodox articles in the party's theoretical journals were required reading for party members and foreign analysts alike.

"We were all aware something had to change. But my big mistake was to believe this could happen under the SED (Communist party)," he said.

Reinhold, now retired, said his institute had in fact prepared various reform strategies. But all had assumed the state and Communist monopoly of power would continue.

He said then-party chief Erich Honecker had been the main barrier to change, locked in a 1930s timeworn where cheap bread, accommodation and a job were the most important values.

Walesa repeats call for May elections

WARSAW (AP) — President Lech Walesa urged parliament Friday to hold elections at the end of May, abandoning the idea of a so-called "political council" which he earlier advocated if elections needed to be postponed.

Walesa's letter to Sejm (parliament) speaker Mikolaj Kozalewicz makes May parliamentary elections a virtual certainty, just days before Pope John Paul II begins his fourth visit to Poland.

The letter refers to early elections as "a condition for stabilising the political situation in our country." Poland has been hit by a wave of strikes in protest against the so-called excessive wage tax and the drop in living standards caused by the radical austerity plan started in January 1990.

The present Sejm, where only one-third of the 460 members were freely elected in May 1989, is almost universally regarded as an obstacle to speedier reform because of its association with the former Communist government.

Since his election in December, Walesa remained silent on the question of parliamentary elections which he promised would be held as quickly as possible.

Last week, having completed consultations with political groups inside and outside parliament, he first advocated the May election deadline.

With parliamentary elections approaching, the Solidarity trade union turned its attention to mapping strategy and choosing a chairman.

The trade union was to open its third national congress Saturday.

At least seven candidates are mentioned as possible successors to Lech Walesa, Solidarity chairman for a decade, who resigned on Dec. 12 after becoming Poland's first freely elected president.

"First of all, the congress is to give us a new chairman and besides it should give us an answer about the union's parliamentary representation," said Lech Kaczynski, the acting chairman of Solidarity, and one of the main candidates for the top leadership.

Kaczynski expects that the union, after leading the nation's almost decade-long struggle against the previous Communist regime and an umbrella-like support for the Solidarity-formed governments since the fall of 1989, will become more of a real trade union, defending workers'

interests.

About 500 delegates representing 2.3 million Solidarity members are expected to debate for two days in the Olivia Sports Hall, with many divided about the union's future involvement in politics.

Walesa is expected to watch the debate closely and address the congress Saturday, but he has refrained from extending his support to any of the candidates.

After stepping down, Walesa suggested the union should be led by Bogdan Borusewicz, his close associate and head of Solidarity's Gdansk chapter, whom Kaczynski considers as his main rival.

Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, who was invited to unionists the economic policy of his government after negotiations with Solidarity on pay policy ended inconclusively Tuesday, is expected to speak Sunday.

Kaczynski warned that economic issues may dominate the debate, since a controversial excess wage tax employed by government as an anti-inflation measure, has caused workers' dissatisfaction throughout Poland.

Solidarity, unlike the OPZZ trade union federation, has shown a realistic approach to the

tax, calling for slight adjustments in pay policy.

The OPZZ, which was previously allied to the former Communist authorities, has demanded that the tax be abolished, and has marshalled dozens of protests and now threatens a general strike sometime next month.

Kaczynski, speaking in a telephone interview, said it would be hard to foresee the result of the economic discussion during congress. "But I believe in the delegates' wisdom," he said.

At its previous congress in April, a poster featuring a red-and-white umbrella — Poland's national colours — symbolised Solidarity's role of a nationwide alliance supporting the democratic political reforms and market-oriented economic drive.

This year, the umbrella disappeared, and the nation's solidarity on the reforms has loosened as a result of economic hardships, and political differences within the union.

Kaczynski said that "the umbrella ceased to be realistic" as a symbol, but he still hoped the union could support the government. "If the problem of the excess wage tax is solved in a

Taiwan announces proposals for reunification with China

TAIPEI (AP) — A top government advisory group proposed Saturday that Taiwan and Peking recognise each other as political entities and renounce hostility as an initial step toward the reunification of China.

In a meeting chaired by President Lee Teng-hui, the National Unification Council also proposed that top officials from Taiwan and China exchange visits while authorities from both sides jointly develop the southeastern Chinese coast to pave the way for future talks on unification.

The 31-member council, established last year, consists of government leaders, lawmakers and scholars. Saturday's proposals on reunification were the most sweeping it has announced.

"Chinese unification should be accomplished in stages under the principles of reasonable, peaceful, equal and reciprocal measures," the council said in proposals passed Saturday.

President Lee is expected to formally announce the package later this month after making some revisions, officials said.

The ruling Nationalist government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war to the Communists on the mainland. Both Taipei and Peking still claim to be the legitimate rulers of all China.

Relations between Taiwan and China have improved significantly since 1987, when Taiwan relaxed a ban on contacts between Taiwanese and Chinese.

Taiwan's indirect trade with China through Hong Kong reached a record \$4.4 billion last

year, an increase of 16 per cent from 1989.

Critics said the council's proposal was high on symbolism as Lee has already pledged to end in May the official state of war against the Communists.

"The government has mapped out plans for unification and expects a goodwill response from mainland China," said Lu Ya-Li, a political science professor at National Taiwan University.

Under the council's guidelines, Taiwan would seek unification on three levels. In the beginning, it said both Taiwan and China should ease restrictions and promote further contacts and mutual understanding while China is encouraged to expedite economic reforms.

In the second phase, both sides should set up bilateral government channels and open direct trade, mail and transportation links.

In the final stage, an institution should be formed for talks on a democratic and united China, the council said.

When the council was formed in October, Taiwan's largest opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, passed a resolution renouncing the country's claim over mainland China.

Advocating an independent Taiwan is viewed as a seditious act by the Nationalist government.